Ornament

Proceedings of the Annual Conference of ICOM-ICDAD

International Committee for Museums and Collections of Decorative Arts and Design

Palácio Nacional da Ajuda
Lisbon · Portugal
10 – 12 October 2023

ICOM international council of museums

ICDAD ICOM international committee for museums and collections of decorative art and design

Hôtel de Soubise,
Salon ovale de la Princesse, Paris.

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Proceedings

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Cloisonné lidded jar with painted enamel designs.
China, Qing dynasty, Qianlong reign (1736-1795).
National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.
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BACK COVER IMAGE
Domes in the Hypostyle Room
decorated by Jujol in Park Güell

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Denise Hagströmer (Senior Curator, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Norway)

Silvia Ferreira, keynote speaker (IHA-NOVA FCSH; IN2PAST / Portugal)
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Mark Sagona (Head of Department of Art and Art History, University of Malta / Malta)
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Moderators:
Melissa M. Rinne (Senior Specialist, Kyoto National Museum, Japan)
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Maria Friend (Cook University / Australia)
The Line of Strength: The Javanese Parang Rusak Motif in European Art

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Sêngkalan Mêmêt: Beautiful Ornament as a Marker of Time

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Evolutionary Aesthetics in the Bethnal Green Museum's Collection of Animal Products

Rebecca Chih-I Lai (National Palace Museum / Taiwan)
Made to Impress: The Cloisonné Duomuhu of the Qianlong Reign in the National Palace Museum's Collection

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Ko Goubert (Museum Leuven / Belgium)
Sumptuous Sobriety: Form and Materiality as Ornament in the Religious Art Deco Design of Dom Martim OSB (1889-1965)

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Moderators:
Gabriela Canavilhas (Chairman of FRESS / Museum of Portuguese Decorative Arts, Portugal) and **Shoshana Resnikoff** (Curator of 20th- and 21st-Century Design at Milwaukee Art Museum, USA)

Martina Pall (Former Director Museum Schell Collection / Austria)
Grotesques, Chimeras and Griffins: Ornaments to Protect Entrance Gates and Treasures

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Daniela Roberts (Institute of Art History in Würzburg / Germany)
Gothic Ornament and its Contribution to a New Historicist Style in Georgian England

Sarah Scarlet Farr (Brantwood House - John Ruskin's former home / United Kingdom)
Managing Visual Material Culture in the English Lake District. The Evolution of Décor at Brantwood. The wall as canvas in John Ruskin's former home.

Uta Coburger (State Palaces and Gardens of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Custodian of the Palatinate / Germany)
"Une querelle de Rocaille" – The Private Library of the Electress Palatinate at Mannheim Palace

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Afternoon visits

FRESS workshops

Mosteiro de São Vicente de Fora

Museu Nacional do Azulejo

Foreword

In his preface to *Ornament: A Modern Perspective*, art historian James Trilling writes:

> Less than a hundred years ago, anyone who cared about art cared about ornament. Today we scarcely know what it is. We have no shared definition, no sense of its history, its uses, how to look at it, least of all how to make it … [Ornament] is a specific word for a specific thing, yet it cuts across all the arts. It is the art we add to art.[1]

The 2023 ICOM-ICDAD Annual Conference, held at the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda in Lisbon, united curators and scholars from around the world in one of Europe's most historically and culturally vibrant cities to contemplate the complexities and relevance of ornament in the decorative arts and design. The papers presented at the conference, a selection of which are included in this publication, investigated not only the aesthetic dimensions of ornament but also its deeper cultural, historical, and ideological meanings. As demonstrated across the conference presentations, ornamentation transcends mere embellishment. It operates as a medium of cultural exchange, a vehicle for ideological expression, and a testament to technological and material ingenuity.

The conference's setting in Lisbon, with its rich ornamental heritage exemplified by its *azulejos* and Baroque architecture, served as an inspiring backdrop for these presentations. Sessions at the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda and the Museu de Artes Decorativas Portuguesas, combined with visits to other local sites—including the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT); the Jerónimos Convent and Church; the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum; the FRESS workshops; the São Vicente de Fora Monastery and Church; and the Museu Nacional do Azulejo—offered participants a tangible connection to the themes discussed. These experiences reinforced the importance of situating scholarship within lived cultural contexts.

Following the conference, participants explored Portugal's architectural, religious, artistic, and cultural heritage during a two-day post-conference program. The first day in Sintra included visits to the Sintra National Palace, Quinta da Regaleira, Monserrate Palace, and Casa do Cipreste. The second day in Coimbra featured scholar-led tours of historic sites, including the University of Coimbra, the Machado de Castro National Museum and the Cryptoporticus of Aeminium. These visits enriched the intellectual and cultural experience, deepening the connections between scholarship and Portugal's ornamental history.

The papers selected for inclusion in this volume reflect a rich diversity of approaches to the study of ornament. Silvia Ferreira, the conference's keynote speaker, explores the role of ornament in Portuguese Baroque woodcarving, demonstrating how the ornamentation of sacred art enhanced the Christian message

1 James Trilling, *Ornament: A Modern Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), viii.

during the Counter-Reformation by appealing to the senses and intellect to bring believers closer to the divine. Mark Sagona describes the integration of nineteenth-century European design trends into liturgical objects and church furniture on the island of Malta, highlighting the stylistic evolution of ornamental mediums such as silver, carved wood, and embroidered textiles, and connecting them to Roman Catholic traditions and European influences.

Daniela Saldanha investigates the historiography of ornament in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on how figures like Aloïs Riegl and John Ruskin emphasize its social significance and stress the democratization of design in contrast to traditional fine arts. Emily Pearce examines the historical use of coinage as ornament, tracing its transformation from functional currency to decorative art adorning individuals and architecture to symbolize wealth, status, exoticism, and opulence.

Pandora Syperek considers the role of ornament in animal life and human visual culture, focusing on the Victoria and Albert Museum's Animal Products Collection (1851–1928), exploring how decorative objects challenge traditional binaries of function and decoration. Chih-I Lai analyzes cloisonné *duomuhu* (milk tea ewers) from the Qianlong reign in Qing-dynasty China, highlighting their ornamentation as a symbol of imperial authority and cultural hybridity, blending traditional Chinese, Manchu, and Western decorative elements to assert imperial power.

António Cota discusses the Wild & Wessel lamp factory in Berlin, exploring how industrial production methods were combined with artistic design to create timeless lamps that dominated the European market during the nineteenth century. Martina Pall discusses the use of grotesques, chimeras, and griffins as protective ornaments, particularly on gates and entranceways, exploring their symbolic roles in guarding treasures and creating a mythical, protective atmosphere.

Daniela Roberts focuses on the Gothic Revival style in Georgian England, analyzing how medieval architectural ornaments were recontextualized in the eighteenth century to enhance the Gothic aesthetic in interior design and signal political power and social status. Sarah Scarlet Farr examines the evolution of décor at Brantwood House, John Ruskin's former home in Cumbria, England, exploring how its ornamental design reflects Ruskin's influence on the Arts and Crafts movement and its adaptation for modern audiences. Uta Coburger examines the ornamentation of an eighteenth-century private library in Mannheim Palace, which reflects an unusual blend of classical and Rocaille styles stemming from the contrasting tastes of its architect and stuccoist.

Mariàngels Fondevila examines the ornamental approaches of Spanish architect Josep Jujol, highlighting influences such as Mediterranean culture, his collaboration with Antoni Gaudí, the city of Barcelona, and religious ideology, while analyzing his innovative use of recycled waste objects. Finally, Katherine Manthorne explores the significance of sculptural images of powerful women from history or myth adorning the parlors, libraries, and entrance halls of nineteenth-century American residences, and considers how such displays might reflect broader societal shifts, including the emancipation of women.

The conference, post-conference tour, and this publication would not have been possible without the generous help and support of many people and institutions. On behalf of the board and membership of ICDAD, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to José Alberto Ribeiro, Director of the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, and his team of curators, staff, and volunteers for generously hosting the

conference; to Gabriela Canavilhas, President of the Fundação Ricardo Espírito Santo Silva (FRESS) – Museu de Artes Decorativas, and her museum staff for co-hosting the conference and allowing us to tour the FRESS workshops; to David Felismino, President of ICOM Portugal, and Roberto Leite, Secretary of ICOM Portugal, for their partnership in organizing this meeting; to Silvia Ferreira, Researcher at Instituto de História da Arte (IHA) and invited Assistant Professor, Departamento de História da Arte (DHA), Nova University, for her fascinating keynote presentation; and to Bárbara Coutinho, Director of MUDE – Museu do Design e da Moda, for sharing her insights and unique perspectives as a guest speaker; and to Maria da Graça Carmona e Costa, President of the Fundação Carmona e Costa, for her sponsorship of the post-conference tour.

We are also most grateful to the following partners for welcoming us to their institutions and generously sharing their expertise: António Brancanes, Director of the Palácio da Regaleira; Joana Santos Coelho, Director of the Mosteiro de São Vicente de Fora; Lurdes Craveiro, Director of the Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro; Alfredo Dias, Vice-Chancellor of the Universidade de Coimbra; Sérgio Mah, Deputy Director of the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT); Alexandre Pais, Director of the Museu Nacional do Azulejo; António Nunes Pereira, Director of the Palácio Nacional de Sintra; António Filipe Pimentel, Director of the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian; and Dalila Rodrigues, Director of the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos.

Finally, I must express my sincere gratitude to Maria José Gaivão Tavares, Curator of the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda and former ICDAD board member, whose capable leadership and hard work over months and years made the conference a tremendous success. She was supported in the organization by the dedicated work of Margarida Abreu and the team of the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda. This publication came together through the efforts of the editorial and production team, expertly directed by Maria José Tavares together with copy editor Fernando Montesinos, whose professionalism, art historical knowledge, and dedication were instrumental to this publication. Eva Van Regenmortel and other members of the ICDAD board guided the project forward in various ways, while proofreader Chris Foster and designer Sónia Teixeira Pinto paid meticulous attention to the text, layout, and design.

This publication is a testament to the collaborative spirit and intellectual rigor that defined the 2023 ICDAD Annual Conference. Ornament, as we have seen, is far more than decorative. This “art we add to art” is a reflection of human ingenuity, a repository of cultural memory, and a catalyst for innovation. It is our hope that this volume will spark renewed interest and offer fresh perspectives on the subject of ornament, serving not only as a record of the insights shared during this conference but also as an invitation to continue the dialogue.

Melissa M. Rinne
Chair, ICOM-ICDAD

DECEMBER 2024

A Festival of Shapes and Meanings:

The Place of Ornament in Portuguese Baroque Woodcarving

Sílvia Ferreira
IHA / NOVA FCSH / IN2PAST

Abstract

The presence of ornament in Baroque gilded woodcarving in Portugal, in the context of sacred art, was decisive for the effectiveness of the Christian message, which was both profoundly sensorial and dogmatic during the Counter-Reformation. The reinforcement of the doctrine, personified by the vindication of the truths of the Catholic tradition, was also supported by the dissemination of the Christological, Marian or saintly symbolism of its pantheon, which was urgently necessary.

Wisely, the Catholic Church allied itself with the sensory potential of forms carved and gilded in wood, thus finding yet another way of accessing believers' affectivity and wonder. Departing from the canon, this opened the door to a firm and fruitful alliance between the senses and the intellect.
At the root of the success of the altarpieces and other structures of this period, which multiplied throughout Portugal and its maritime possessions during the *ancien régime*, was a perfect understanding of the potential of ornament.

As a means of making surfaces more dynamic and an ideal ally of the Baroque aesthetic, which favored the play, rhythm, sumptuousness and profusion of forms, in models that were almost delirious but never devoid of a well-established internal organisation, ornament dazzled the senses and drew the intellect towards God.[1]

"La Folie du Voir: De L'esthétique Baroque" [2]

Sacred spaces in the Portuguese Baroque period, from the last third of the 17th century till approximately the middle of the 18th, complied with the principles of this aesthetic movement imported mainly from Rome and, to a lesser degree, France.

Portuguese churches at this time featured two pivotal art forms: narrative blue and white tiles and gilded woodcarving. Both were supported by grotteschi paintings and, later, by quadrattura on the ceilings, multichromatic marble, wax flowers, imposing candelabra and sumptuous textiles, whose colourful and intricate patterns dressed and enriched the spaces.

However, during this period in Portugal, the one art form which stood out as a harmonising influence and, at times, support for all others was gilded woodcarving, which adorned temples from the end of the 17th century to at least the middle of the 18th. Its great acceptance was due to the strong woodworking tradition in Portugal, explained by relatively cheap and ductile raw materials, and the fact that a school of stone sculpture had not been successfully established there.[3]

The various artistic elements that were part of a church and complemented the altars, such as pelmets, the triumphal arches of the main chapels, organs, balustrades and pulpits, were all carved in wood that was later gilded. The scenic impact achieved by the intensive use of gilded wood was wisely exploited for instance through the well-thought-out placement of light points.

During the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church set about asserting itself unequivocally, a process in which, as we know, the Company of Jesus played a decisive role from its headquarters in Rome. No other religious institution had such a decisive influence on catechising after the Protestant Reformation. In the city of the popes, artists at the service of Jesuit patrons reflected upon and developed new forms of displaying the subjects and themes of the dogmas of the Church. They had to act effectively and quickly to counter their enemies' insidious attacks on the canonical truths established by the patristic texts over centuries.[4]

In Portugal, the decrees of the Council of Trent were rapidly implemented by Cardinal Henrique and King Sebastião[5] through the Synodal Constitutions and the writings of the priests and their preaching in the churches and in the streets. The Holy Inquisition reinforced these efforts, placing all of society under the Catholic Church's scrutiny.[6]

How did Portugal convey these ideas through art? The most probable answer is by using the materials and technology closest at hand. The use of immersive blue and white narrative panel tiles on the walls and sometimes the ceilings of churches was complemented by altarpieces and other carvings that covered almost all of the remaining surfaces. Tiles and gilded woodcarving had been a constant feature of Portuguese churches since the 16th century, a successful marriage that spread quickly throughout continental Portugal, the Azores, Madeira and the overseas territories in Africa and Brazil (Fig. 1).

1 This study was supported by Portuguese public funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, in the context of Transitory Norm no. DL 57/2016/CP1453/CT0029. https://doi.org/10.54499/DL57/2016/CP1453/CT0029

2 Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *"La Folie du Voir": De L'esthétique Baroque*, (Paris: Galillé, 1986).

3 Robert C. Smith, *A Talha em Portugal*, (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1963), 7–8.

4 John W. O'Malley, Gauvin A. Bailey and Giovanni Sale, eds. *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540-1773*, (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2005).

5 See Amélia Maria Polónia da Silva, "Recepção do Concílio de Trento em Portugal: as normas enviadas pelo Cardeal D. Henrique aos Bispos do Reino, em 1553", *História: Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, (2019): 133–143.

6 See Federico Palomo, *A Contra-Reforma em Portugal 1540-1700*, (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2006).

Figure 1
Low choir of the church of St Augustine
in Marvila. Lisbon, Portugal.
© Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa. José Vicente.
PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/LSB000961.

The Counter-Reformation played a decisive role in the emergence of new altar forms and devotions, as well as the consolidation of ornament as a fundamental tool to attract believers to doctrine and sacred spaces.

The result of the Catholic Reformation was a triumphant and festive Church. The life of the Christian people was entangled by the constant festivities and events promoted by the royal family, the nobles and the clergy in the many churches scattered through the country, like royal weddings, baptisms, funerary ceremonies, entries of ambassadors and processions. Ornamentation seemed to feed on ornamentation. The objects that appeared in these festivities were created by a variety of artists, from sculptors and woodcarvers to painters, weavers and goldsmiths, among others. The guidelines of the patrons, who always desired their commissions to attain new levels of richness and splendour, were of pivotal importance. The search for novelty, excellence and magnificence also led to the surprising creation of a new model that arose from combining different ornamental traditions. Of course, Lisbon was the centre of this movement, as the city where the king and court resided. It was also the port where the novelties from Europe, Asia, Brazil and Africa, which kings, nobleman and clergy were so eager to discover and sometimes embrace, arrived.[7]
In this sense, ornament "reflects the interaction and transformation of cultures through migration, trade, conquest and the spread of religion".[8]

How did the Portuguese art of religious woodcarving use ornament to get its message across? It did so by interweaving forms, by playing with the elements of canonical discourse and mixing them with pagan elements, by pretending to deconstruct the sense of order that prevailed in the classical architectural treatises of Palladio, Serlio and Vignola, and by creating theatrical environments infused with movement, fantasy and splendour.

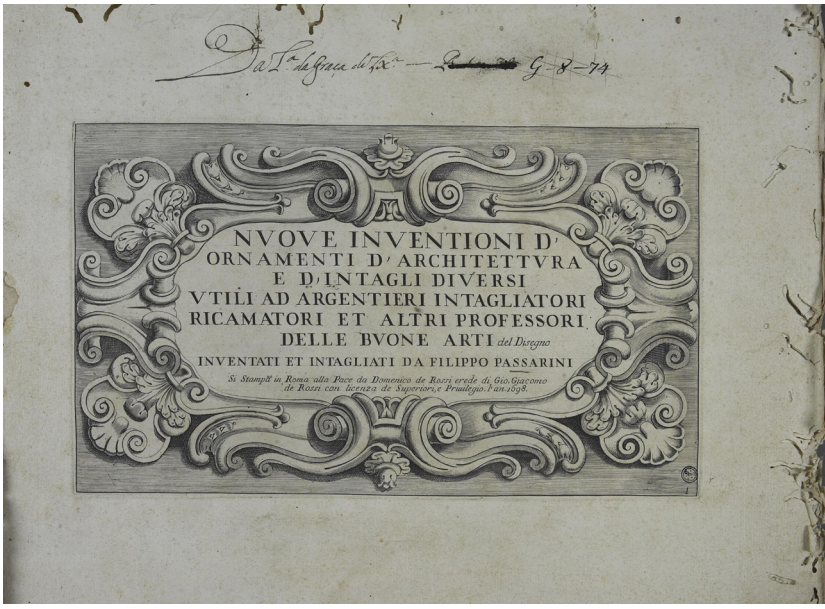

Figure 2
Front cover of the book *Nuove Inventione d'Ornamenti d'Architettura e d'Intagli Diversi* [...] by Fillipo Passarini. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, *Secção de Reservados- Iconografia*, E. A. 65 A. Available in the public domain online at https://bndigital.bnportugal.gov.pt/idurl/1/67198.

The coexistence of different art forms made with very different materials, like woodcarving, ceramic tiles, marble inlay or gold and silverware, had something in common: the use of similar ornamental elements. The influences were mainly from Flanders, Italy, Spain and France. Architectural treatises and albums of ornamentation or simple engravings from these countries circulated in Portugal and are known to have existed in convent libraries.[9] One example is the convent of Our Lady of Grace in Lisbon, which contained several engravings now held in storage at the National Library of Portugal.[10]

7 Annemarie Jordan Gschwend and K. J. P. Lowe, eds, *The Global City. On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015).

8 James Trilling, *The language of ornament*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 104.

9 See the collection of 17th and 18th-century ornamental engravings and drawings at the National Portuguese Library and National Museum of Ancient Art (Lisbon).

10 Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, *Reservados de Iconografia*, E.A. 65 A, (Lisbon).

Architectural treatises also circulated among artists and were part of the libraries of the most erudite commissioners, be they members of the clergy or nobility. The literary academies included some of the most prominent members of the court and Church. There were priests who were architects and noblemen who drew. The Marquis of Fontes, Rodrigo Anes de Sá Almeida Meneses, for example, was known for his skills in military design, and the Governor of Angola, Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos, was also known for his talent for architectural design. The latter is said to have been responsible for the drawing of the celebration of the beatification of Saint Francis Xavier in Angola in 1620.[11]

The altarpiece designers and carvers knew and used these treatises. Even though these books or albums of ornament are not easy to find in Portuguese libraries and archives, the objects left behind bear evidence of their use.[12] Proving that the imagination, which is always combinatory, is the faculty that best serves the decorative arts, the altarpieces and complementary carvings did not mimic the engravings and suggestions in the ornament albums but, rather, were inspired by them, creating new compositions. During research by scholars on the gilded woodcarving in Portugal, very few examples were found of compositions that were identical to those illustrated in treatises or albums of ornamentation (Fig. 2).

As mentioned, ornament essentially targets the sense of sight, and the wonder of the eye is also the wonder of the mind. The mind embodied by the discourse of the Catholic Church in the reinforcement of its dogmas, and through its sermons and other forms of catechism, is perceived as a magnificent exhibition of God's power, beauty and wonder. In this context, the pleasure of seeing is cultivated in a very precise manner and can lead to the rationalisation of the subject matter. This is why the Baroque age was also profoundly theatrical and gave space to the most enflamed writings, such as those of the Portuguese Jesuit António Vieira.[13] The mind rises to the challenge of the complex and strives to give it form and meaning. What seems confusing and sometimes exaggerated and chaotic in Baroque ornament is a challenge to the mind and the result of the creative imagination of the architects, sculptors, woodcarvers and ornamentists.

Even though we have little awareness of this complexity today, things were seen differently in the 17th and 18th centuries. The gilded wood-carved altars were places where the divine manifested. One prayed with devotion to Christ, the Virgin Mary and the numerous saints of the Catholic Pantheon. The images of flowers, grapes, acanthus leaves, *putti*, angels and shells, all combined in pleasant forms and rhythms, were a glimpse of paradise, reminders of one's mortal condition and the profanity of the world. Beside them, sometimes disrupting the message, appeared fantastical and wild figures. These elements tended to disappear in the second and third decades of the 18th century, at least in the art produced in Lisbon.

"The power to beautify is also the power to glorify"[14]

How did ornament in the Portuguese Baroque decorative arts help to beautify and glorify the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church?

11 Maria João Pereira Coutinho and Sílvia Ferreira, 'Aplausos e triunfos em louvor de São Francisco Xavier: as festas de beatificação nas cidades de Lisboa, Porto e Luanda (1619–1620),' in *Missão, espiritualidade e arte em São Francisco Xavier,* (Lisboa: Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, 2020), 204.

12 For instance, the treatise by the Jesuit father Andrea Pozzo, *Perspectiva Pictorum, et Architectorum*, (Rome: Antonio De Rossi, 1737-1741), was well known in Portugal.

13 Arnaldo do Espírito Santo et. al., *Estudos sobre o Padre António Vieira. A sedução da palavra: os sermões*, vol. I, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 2017).

14 Both this heading and the following one are from James Trilling's aforementioned book, *The language of ornament.*

Figure 3
Main altar tabernacle of the church of Saint Mary of Loures. Portugal.
© Sílvia Ferreira.

Portuguese Baroque altars had a large open space in the middle where the Holy Sacrament sat on a pyramidal throne, celebrating the dogma of the effective presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist. Large Eucharistic thrones with, generally, between 5 and 7 steps were adorned mostly with phytomorphic elements, such as flowers or acanthus leaves, and winged angel heads. The other main feature of these altars was a series of large open spaces, mostly between the columns, for human-sized statuary, normally the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary's parents, Saint Joseph or other saints. The attic would feature emblems, angels and Christian iconography, such as the lamb, pelican and phoenix, and sometimes other Marian and Christological emblems.

It was usual to cover the entire space of a chapel with gilded woodcarving in a way that suggested embracing or entering a golden cavern. The liturgical relevance of the tabernacle, as the dwelling place of Christ's body, was enormous. For instance, in the altar of Our Lady of Doctrine at the church of Saint Roch in Lisbon, the ornamentation consists of acanthus leaves and scrolls presented by adult angels, whose drapery and bodies seem to flow over the composition. The same principle is present in the solar-shaped tabernacle on the main altar of the church of Saint Mary in Loures, near Lisbon. Again, two angels present the place for the Holy Sacrament. There is the same sense of movement and dignitas glorifying God through the beauty of the ornament, which is also symbolic: grapes, wheat, the heads of little angels, clouds and shells are the motifs that stand out. In another altar, at the parish church of Bucelas, also near Lisbon, the altar features the Four Evangelists seated on large Solomonic columns. Though this is a rare artistic choice, what it conveys is very important: the first four pillars of the Catholic Church are seated on the four columns that sustain the altar, the place where the Divine manifests itself. They are seated among the wheat and grapes, the body and blood of Christ, and among flowers symbolising the resurrection and abundance of life (Fig. 3).

"Ornament is the only visual art whose primary if not exclusive purpose is pleasure"

One of the "discoveries" of Baroque art and, consequently, also of gilded woodcarving was the potential of the human body as ornament, especially that of little children.

Putti played a very specific role in this type of artistic media, often depicted climbing Solomonic columns in various positions among grapes and ears of wheat, the symbols of Jesus's sacrifice. Their nude bodies give life to the composition, while their innocence becomes the attribute which enables their symbolic nourishment from grapes and wheat. They are also found as little atlantes pretending to bear the weight of altarpieces, creating paradoxical images of tiny little bodies supporting a massive structure. Found all over chapels and ceilings, *putti* are depicted in the most playful positions, interacting with one another alongside fantastical animals, playing or simply posing as decorative motifs, lending movement and joy to gilded woodcarving surfaces. *Putti* also act as halos for holy figures, support images of saints and adorn tabernacles, attics and corbels. Their importance to the art of Baroque woodcarving can also be measured by the existence of chapters in Portuguese architectural treatises on how to carve a child's body or even by clauses in known woodcarving contracts where patrons specifically ask for them as proof of perfection in the carving and for their aesthetic allure.[15]

The appeal of their chubbiness and innocence helps to create an immediate response in the viewer. During the first half of the 18th century, children made up about thirty to forty per cent

15 Inácio da Piedade Vasconcellos, *Artefactos symmetriacos, e geométricos* [...], book I, chapter XI, (Lisboa: Oficina de Joseph Antonio da Sylva, 1733), 45.

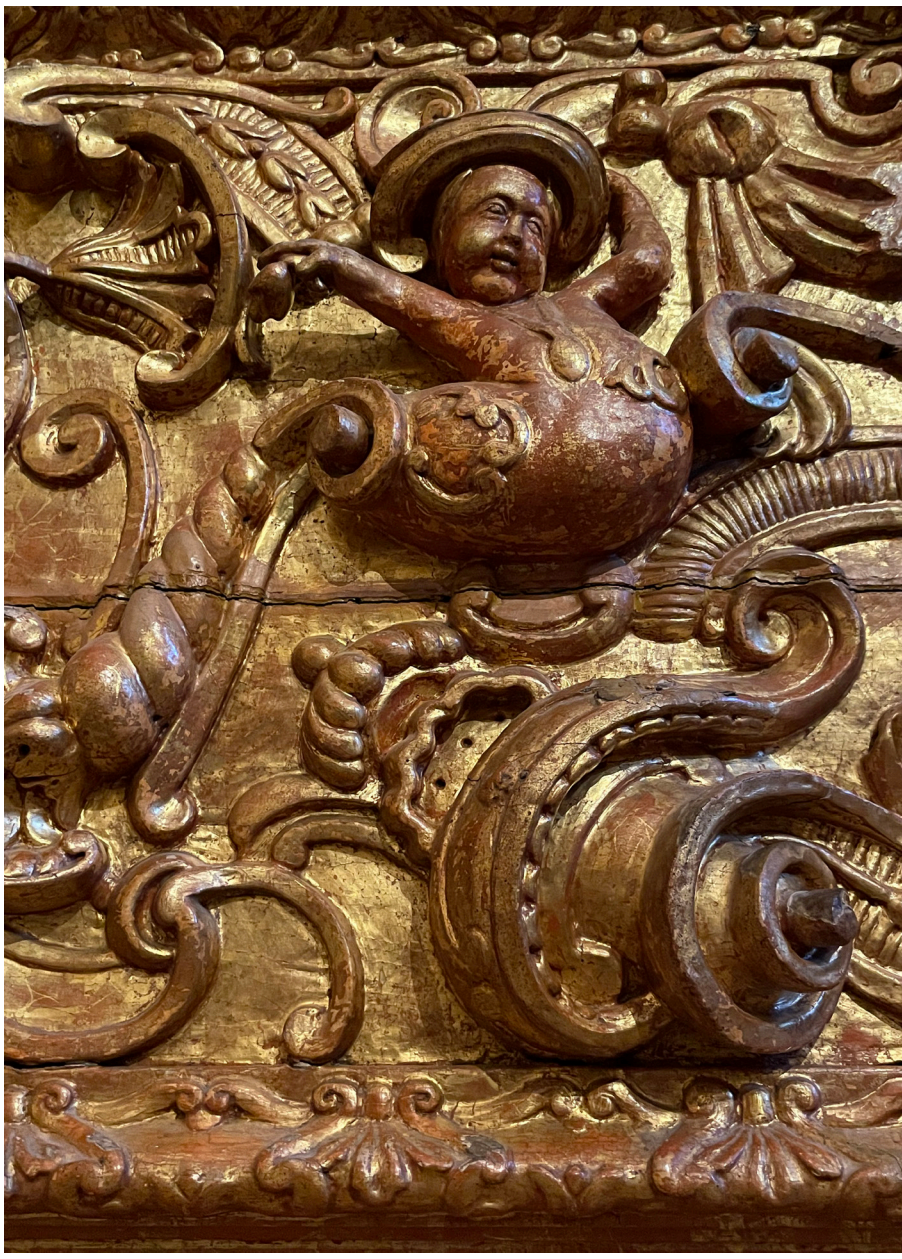

Figure 4
Putti sitting on the columns of the main altar of the church of Our Lady of *Pena*. Lisbon, Portugal. © Sílvia Ferreira.

Figure 5
Human snail on a gilded wood-carved panel in the church of Saint Anthony in Lagos. Portugal. © Sílvia Ferreira.

of the population. Regardless of the high rate of infant mortality, children were omnipresent, while their role in the Christian society of the Counter-Reformation increased with the advances in health conditions and a growing awareness of the role they played, something which may be seen from noble and bourgeois family portraiture of the period. Almost the same occurred with adult human bodies. The use of the human body on altars brought the Church closer to the observer, giving the human form dignity and a real presence within the sacred. The principle that God became man in the profane world legitimised these choices and allowed for a greater connection and involvement of the believer with the doctrine, directing him/her towards the practice of the Catholic principles (Fig. 4).

"Most ornament, except the simplest, implies a challenge to reality"

The interaction between children and fantastical animals, such as tritons and phoenixes, or real ones, such as eagles and dolphins, was a constant feature of Portuguese gilded woodcarving. As mentioned, the medieval bestiary and the renaissance of ancient Roman grotteschi played a part in the ornamental choices of the artists of the 17th and 18th centuries. For instance, children in elegant positions, riding what seem to be dolphins or tritons and dominating the scene, are not rare in Baroque woodcarving.[16] Also, the presence of masks, half bodies with foliage among acanthus leaves, created a powerful decorative sense and contributed to the festive and awe-inspiring ambience of the altars.

The presence of a half-human body that finishes in the form of a snail in the woodcarving in the nave of the church of Saint Anthony in Lagos attests to the worlds of wonder and awe that these images can convey. The artist plays with his imagination, creating a melting pot of shapes that communicate with each other, giving the whole composition great decorative power and hinting at new possibilities. These creatures do not exist, but it is almost as if they did. To God, creator of all creatures, nothing is impossible, and this world of wonder created by the imagination follows that principle (Fig. 5).

The same occurs with the mermaids on the main altar in the parish church of Bucelas. Though rare in the Portuguese decorative arts, these images can sometimes be spotted on tiles, marble inlay and woodcarving. Mermaids, atlantes and sometimes satyrs appear on altars or organ cases, but always as supporting figures whose presence is restricted to the lower parts of the structure. They bear the weight of the altar or organ cases, as creatures of the underworld, adopting a submissive posture and demeanour (Fig. 6).

Something different occurs with the triumphal images of angels and virtues. For instance, a composition at the Cathedral of Setúbal shows an angel leading a triumphal car pulled by a giant eagle. The dominant image of the angel clearly shows a decorative hierarchy between the different creatures. These triumphal cars were often used in processions and other festivities. Unfortunately, in Portugal, no actual drawings of this kind are known of, but we have the literary descriptions of festivities that mention them.[17]

16 The image of a *putto* riding a dolphin titled "Animo Piace vole, Trattabili & amoreuole", very similar to those thatsometimes appear on woodcarvings, can be seen in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. See Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, (Venice: Cristoforo Tomasini, 1645), Libro Primo, 37.

17 See Maria João Pereira Coutinho and Sílvia Ferreira, "As Festas de Beatificação de São Francisco Xavier na Igreja de São Roque de Lisboa: Magnificência, Erudição e Arte ao Serviço da Fé", in *Para a História das Ordens e Congregações Religiosas em Portugal, na Europa e no Mundo,* vol. I, ed. José Eduardo Franco and Luís Machado de Abreu, (Lisboa: Paulinas, 2014), 855–871.

"Ornament embodies the freedom of fantasy and conveys an immediate sense of the artist's mind at play"

As mentioned, ornament is a product of the artist's imagination, and that faculty can be explored in the most exquisite ways. The creation of possible worlds derives from the association of forms that can create new meanings and direct the mind of the observer. Pleasure and fantasy used in the context of sacred art is another form of communicating the truths of the Catholic Church. The pure forms of the classical orders were replaced by movement, fantasy and a greater sense of belonging and self-identification.

Although these forms seem overwhelming and, sometimes, confusing, the use of ornament in gilded woodcarving follows concrete and explicit rules. Symmetry, for example, is one of the main principles of ornamentation on Baroque altarpieces. The profusion of ornamental motifs, which sometimes seem to submerge the altarpiece's architectural structure, is rarely random or devoid of rhythm, meaning and reading. Again, in-depth observation of woodcarving ornamentation shows the principles already mentioned, alongside those of strength and grace, stylisation or literalism, conventional and local forms, or innovation through integration of foreign ones.[18]

Seeing is the key to understanding ornament, to losing oneself in the profoundly complex world of delight and continuing on to the enlightening and rationalising message.

The Baroque church is festive, speaks of transcendence and centres on divine love and its glory. Even when the themes are more sombre, such as the invocations of Our Lady of Sorrows, the Pietà, or Our Lady of the Good Death, all are preludes to the celebration that is anticipated ahead. There is consternation and sadness, but these are only temporary. For in their essence, the luminous face of hope in the Resurrection already resides.

Figure 6
Mermaids on the main altar of the church of Our Lady of Purification. Bucelas, Portugal.
© Sílvia Ferreira

18 James Trilling, *The Language of ornament*, 11.

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Bio

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The Nature of Ornament in the Ecclesiastical Decorative Arts in Malta (1850–1900):

Evolution, Typologies and Influences

Mark Sagona

Abstract

In spite of its geographical location at the periphery of Europe, the tiny central Mediterranean island of Malta managed to absorb the most important design currents of the nineteenth century. This paper examines the ornamental components in a number of documented case studies of liturgical objets d'art and items of church furniture across the many ecclesiastical establishments which dot the Maltese archipelago. The stylistic evolution of ornament, which manifests itself in the works of Maltese designers and decorative practitioners, as well as in significant importations from various European centres, including Rome, Paris and London, is considered vis-á-vis the spirit of the time, and the typical nineteenth-century desire for variety and pluralism. In this study, the various typologies in use – largely appearing in the different media of silver, wood carving and embroidery – are explored, juxtaposed and compared to their occurrence on the international stage, proving that Malta was not isolated from mainland Europe.

The paper discusses the role and function of ornament within the specific context of Roman Catholic liturgy and the celebration of feasts in honour of village patron saints, and explores the notions of tradition and invention and the peculiar stylistic timbre of different designers within the revivalist and eclecticist design attitudes of the period. Possible sources and influences are also explored, including the circulation of pattern books, workshop drawings and the strong Italian bias.

Figure 1

Cesare Galdes and unidentified Lyon firm, *Antependium centrepiece*, designed 1880, produced 1881, gold-thread embroidery on red velvet. Parish church of St George, Victoria, Gozo (exhibited at Il-Ħaġar Museum, Victoria). © Charles Paul Azzopardi.

Figure 2

Cesare Galdes and Achille Capsa, *Antependium for altar of St Martin of Tours*, 1865, silver. Parish Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta. © Daniel Cilia.

In his *Handbook of Ornament*, published in 1888, the German artist and designer Franz Sales Meyer (1849–1927), professor of ornament at the School of Applied Art in Karlsruhe, Germany, defines ornament as follows: "The term 'Ornament', in its limited sense, includes such of the Elements of Decoration as are adapted, or developed, from Natural Foliage. These differ from the Geometrical elements, in as much as they are *organic*, i.e. possessing stems, leaves, flowers, etc, while the latter are *inorganic*."[1] Within a Roman Catholic context, the use of ornament as a form of decoration is synonymous with the adornment of sacred spaces and objects in liturgical use. The extensive typologies of ornament in use in Europe and North America[2] often find themselves in churches: in their decoration, furniture and liturgical *objets d'art*.

If one juxtaposes and compares the ornamental content of a selection of decorative arts commissions scattered across several churches in the central Mediterranean islands of Malta and Gozo, produced at various stages between 1850 and 1900, clear differences in its nature, invention and application emerge. These variations reflect not only individual interpretations of staple ornamental elements, but they also indicate access to printed sources and the larger international context which results from contemporary design taste and evolving stylistic developments. This short contribution examines the ornamental components of a number of documented case studies in Maltese churches. The works discussed fall under three different categories: those which were entirely designed and produced in Malta; those which were imported from different European centres such as Rome and Paris; and those which were designed in Malta and executed abroad. However, the application of ornament often follows the same spirit, a clear reminder of Malta's extension of the European milieu.[3]

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of great variety in the application of ornament, reflected in the wide familiarity with numerous ornamental forms, which, together with the pluralism of decorative styles, is very symptomatic of Victorian England. Simon Jervis, in his landmark study of High Victorian design, perceptively remarks that "richness was not only a natural result of variety: it became a goal in itself".[4] This multifaceted decorative arts scenario is, by nature, an extremely complex one, complicating the identification of stylistic sources and the recognition of specific hands in the production of ornamental passages. Specific idiosyncrasies in the treatment of ornamental forms and general design attitudes frequently reflect the designer's personal stylistic interpretation of a specific ornamental element, which is often shaped by the overriding spirit of the time and the context in which the master operated.

Setting the context

The selected commissions highlight the richness, variety and abundance of one of Malta's most significant periods in the production of the ecclesiastical decorative arts. A long-standing tradition of decorative workshops specialising in

1 Franz Sales Meyer, *Handbook of Ornament: A grammar of art industrial and architectural designing in all its branches for practical as well as theoretical use* (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), vii.

2 Michael Snodin, *The V&A Book of Western Ornament* (London: V&A Publications, 2006).

3 Most examples are discussed in Mark Sagona, "The ecclesiastical decorative arts in Malta 1850-1900: Style and Ornament" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History of Art, University of Malta, 2014); Mark Sagona, "Malta and the Renaissance Revival: Ecclesiastical decorative arts at the crossroads of Britain and Italy," *The Decorative Arts Society – 1850 to the present* 29 (2015); Mark Sagona, "Gothic Revival influences on Europe's border: change and resistance in Malta between decorative arts and architecture," *The Decorative Arts Society – 1850 to the present* 45 (2021); Mark Sagona, "The Decorative Arts in Gozo: Artistically Significant Ecclesiastical Specimens from the Nineteenth Century," in *Identity of an Island – Gozo: Art between Past and Present*, ed. Mark Sagona (Malta: Teatru Astra, Midsea Books, 2022), 55–57.

4 Simon Jervis, *High Victorian Design* (London: The Boydell Press, 1983), 9.

Figure 3
Giuseppe Hyzler and Saverio Cannataci, *Antependium for high altar*, 1848, silver. Parish church of St Helen, Birkirkara.
© Joe P. Borg.

Figure 4
Vincenzo Belli the Younger, *Antependium for altar of St Homobonus*, 1852, silver. Parish Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta.
© Charles Paul Azzopardi.

various media was greatly consolidated during the long reign of the Knights of the Order of St John (1530–1798). The arrival of the British in 1800 did not dampen the love for decoration, and such commissions continued unabated, reaching a significantly high point in the second half of the century.

Within the immense domain of European nineteenth-century decorative arts, ornament represented the main vehicle of artistic expression. This was no different in tiny Malta. Recent ongoing studies show that despite its insularity and geographical positioning on the periphery of Europe, the island still managed to absorb many of the design currents of the era, which were facilitated through the peculiar context of a British Crown Colony combined with a powerful Roman Catholic presence which had deep and ancient roots. The Church was so central to the life of the people that all aspects of social life revolved around it.[5] The identity of a town or village was equated with its parish church. The active participation of the people in the life of the Church was also manifested through the various acts of munificence noted during this period.[6]

The development of the Maltese annual *festa* in honour of the patron saint of a town or village, which had a direct bearing on the development of the decorative arts, resulted from this strong religious bondage. These Maltese traits were recorded by Nicola Zammit (1815–99), himself one of the island's leading designers, who commented on the eagerness of the faithful to contribute financially to the embellishment of churches.[7] Churches were constantly commissioning works to decorate their sacred spaces during these celebrations.

Role and function, liturgy and feasts

The role and function of movable works was specifically to embellish the church on the annual occasion of the titular feast or other specific devotions during which particular altars or areas within the church were dressed up: antependia, altar canopies, candlesticks, reliquaries, monstrance thrones – the list is endless. These works were not intended for everyday use but to be put up for very special liturgical occasions, and usually only for a couple of days; they were otherwise normally stored away. Their primary intention was therefore festive, not only in the way ornament was applied but also in the materials used: primarily silver, sometimes parcel-gilt, wood (usually gilt or silvergilt) and embroidery (normally gold thread on velvet or white lamé). The focus was largely on the main altar, around which centred the many liturgical celebrations during the feastdays, including mass and vespers.

Not everything was linked to the annual feast, however. Decorative commissions of a permanent nature were also undertaken. These included organ lofts and pulpits, or other decorative schemes on walls and ceilings. Other decorative undertakings were directly related to processional statues, including processional pedestals and predelle. The latter came to be an important repository of ornamental elements and a major constituent in the development of the decorative arts. One important example, which provided an important prototype for later works, is that for the titular processional statue in the harbour city of Senglea, produced in 1892 to the designs of the little-known Michele De Giovanni (active ca. 1890–ca. 1930).[8]

5 Jeremy Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks: Religion and Politics in Rural Malta* (London: The Anthlone Press, 1965), 31.

6 Dominic Fenech, "Birgu during the British Period," in *Birgu - A Maltese Maritime City*, ed. Lino Bugeja, Mario Buhagiar and Stanley Fiorini (Malta: Malta University Services, 1993), 168.

7 Nicola Zammit, *Malta and its Industries* (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1886), 7.

8 Sagona, "The ecclesiastical decorative arts," 168.

Figure 5
A.W.N. Pugin (attr.) and John Hardman & Co, *Mitre*, ca. 1850, gold-thread embroidery on silver and gold lamé, gilt metal and semi-precious stones. Mdina Cathedral Museum.
© Charles Paul Azzopardi.

Ornament between tradition and invention

The typologies of ornament which appear in the ecclesiastical decorative arts in Malta during this period are many and reflect a deep familiarity with the vast vocabulary involved. These included artificial foliage, such as scrolls, and many types of natural ornament. The acanthus was possibly the most disseminated. It belongs to the family of natural forms borrowed from plants but then transformed and reinterpreted, often beyond recognition.[9] One can see its recurrence in almost every work, be it local or foreign, changing according to the personal temperament of the designer: sometimes rigid or stylised, sometimes agitated; on other occasions naturalistic or verging on the flamboyant, as in the many works designed by Nicola Zammit.

Floral ornament usually takes the form of hanging festoons which are grouped or arranged in bouquets or festoons, as in the altar vases produced by the Roman silversmith Vincenzo Brugo (active 1843–ca. 1885) in 1880 for the parish church of Żebbuġ. Other natural ornaments such as vine leaves and tendrils and sheafs of corn, or palm fronds and lilies or roses, were also much in use, and they often served an iconographical role. In examples relating to martyred saints, the Chi Rho (indicating Christ) was especially common. A fine example appears in the exquisitely embroidered antependium centrepiece designed by Cesare Galdes (1822–90) for the high altar of St George's parish church in Victoria, on the island of Gozo, in 1880 and executed in Lyon the following year (Fig. 1). The ornament used by Galdes is immediately identifiable: his elegant and intertwining foliage contains an unmissable serrated and frilly character, a quality which was carried on by his son Giovanni (1850–1904). This character is very clear in the silver antependium designed by Cesare Galdes for the altar of St Martin of Tours at the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta, dating to 1865, which includes a bishop's mitre, crown and cross intertwined with foliage on the side panels (Fig. 2).

Angels and cherub heads also belong to the family of natural ornaments, which many times double up as iconographical passages. As Christian symbols of salvation and resurrection, they naturally appear in many works. The Nazarene artist Giuseppe Hyzler (1787–1858), Malta's most influential mid-century artist, employs them in his antependium for the high altar at Mdina Cathedral, produced in 1838, and also in a particularly interesting sanctuary lamp at the Valletta Augustinians, executed posthumously in 1863. The same typology of angels appears in one of Malta's most extraordinary mid-century works: the parcel-gilt silver antependium for the high altar at the parish church of St Helen in Birkirkara, executed to Hyzler's designs in 1848 (Fig. 3). Here, they become part of the central relief of the *Adoration of the Holy Lamb*, where they join a series of winged cherub heads to fulfil a largely iconographical role.

Geometrical ornament and motifs, such as lozenges, circles, triangles and octagons, also appear in various works and it is clear that several masters used them well in creating spaces to be inhabited by foliage and other ornamentation. The already-mentioned Nicola Zammit, for example, employed a central, prominent, curvilinear frame in his parcel-gilt silver antependium for the high altar at Cospicua parish church, produced in 1882. The geometrical imprint also dominates the two important silver antependia produced in the early 1850s by the artistically important Roman silversmith Vincenzo Belli the Younger (active 1828–59) for the altars of SS Crispin and Crispinian, and St Homobonus at the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta, especially in the central octagonal frame (Fig. 4). Furthermore, the magnificent mitre attributed to the great A.W.N. Pugin and John Hardman & Co of Birmingham, which belonged to the Maltese bishop Annetto Casolani (1815–66), now in the collection of the Mdina Cathedral Museum (Fig. 5), includes clear geometrical motifs anchored in Gothic vocabulary.

9 Sales Meyer, *Handbook of Ornament*, 34–35.

There is a greater architectural quality in the antependium for the altar of St Michael at the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, Valletta, produced by Luigi Torchio of Rome in 1891 to designs by Giovanni Galdes (1850-1904). As one of the most representative works of the Renaissance Revival in Malta, the work takes the form of three arches carried by pairs of banded columns which flank a central decorated panel. This also occurs in the set of four silver lanterns which Nicola Zammit designed for the parish church of Żabbar in 1875, bearing clear affinities with the master's flamboyant and boldly eclectic architectural style (Fig. 6). In the hands of Zammit, ornament becomes a visually complex aesthetic, with a language which is markedly bold and abstracted.

Eclecticism and the Baroque Revival are especially evident in the works of Abramo Gatt (1863–1944), Malta's most gifted designer at the turn of the twentieth century.[10] His design output embraces organic and geometric ornament, which is then amalgamated with scrolls, niches, medallions, panelling, corbels, pelmets, cherub heads, cornices, to mention just some of the elements of his extremely rich and varied decoration. Strapwork, whose genesis dates back to the sixteenth century, is repeatedly used in Gatt's work as the skeletal ornamental framework of his decorative schemes, as can be observed in his several antependia. His silver antependium for the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary at the parish church of St George at Qormi, designed in 1892, is reflective of his mature engagement with a wide array of ornamental forms, including strapwork.

Influences and sources

There should be no doubt that one of the ways ornament circulated in Malta was through the availability and circulation of pattern books and design manuals, even though, to date, their identification and documentation has proved to be elusive. This is how Gothic Revival ornament reached the islands by the 1840s, presumably via a British connection.[11] Another path for the dissemination of ornament was through workshop drawings and/or models which were passed down from one generation to the next. Publications on landmark international expositions are documented on the island, but it is not known whether these included such important volumes as Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*.

The extent of the influence of the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, which was set up in 1852, soon after that of London, is hard to measure. Competitions in wood carving were among the society's initiatives to promote art and industry in Malta, alongside the organisation of exhibitions such as the Industrial Exhibition of 1864. A link with London also existed in the design classes, which were run in the government schools at Valletta and the harbour area. Examination papers for these courses, in which ornamental illustrations had to be copied by candidates, were supplied by the Board of Education in South Kensington.[12]

The design masters who were employed by the colonial government in these schools were often those involved in the ecclesiastical decorative arts. The schools' curriculum remains unclear, but it seems to have involved the copying of patterns, motifs and ornaments from manuals and pattern books. Additionally, the influence exerted by the short-lived Technical and Manual School in Strada Levante, Valletta, in 1893, under the direction of the Italian sculptor and decorator Vincenzo Cardona (active ca. 1880–1920), is much clearer, and the master was instrumental in instilling a strong ornate character in a number of Maltese students, including the young Francesco Saverio Sciortino (1875–1958) and Emanuele Buhagiar (1876–1962).

The Roman Catholic-Italian ethos perhaps provided the most powerful stimulus. Many works in Malta were commissioned in Rome, with local

10 Mark Sagona and Anthony Gatt, *Eclecticism and the Baroque Revival in the Decorative Arts in Malta – The Context for Abramo Gatt (1863-1944)* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2024) (forthcoming).

11 Sagona, "Gothic Revival influences," 32.

12 Sagona, "Malta and the Renaissance Revival," 12–13.

Figure 6
Nicola Zammit and Paolo Busuttil, *Processional lantern* (one of four), designed 1875, produced 1878, silver. Parish church of the Virgin of Graces, Żabbar.

production running on a parallel with church furnishing in the Eternal City and other major Italian cities such as Milan and Naples. This resulted from the intimate ties that existed between Italy and Malta over the centuries, and which did not dissipate during the nineteenth century. On the contrary, during this period, Rome remained one of the greatest cultural points of reference for the Maltese Islands, and the quest to emulate the spirit of Rome was rekindled.[13] Significantly, despite Malta being a British colony, the influence of British design, although present, is rarely strong, and it is in Italy that the answer to the question of stylistic characteristics is to be found.

The eclectic spirit generated in this period, however, contains many parallels with Victorian England, perhaps most especially in the works of the designers active in the years straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Catalogues of firms specialising in the production of church furniture and liturgical artefacts – such as Tanfani & Bertarelli of Rome and Antonio Ghezzi & Figlio and Andreoni & Franceschini of Milan, whose catalogues were definitely in circulation on the island – provided another channel for the dissemination of ornament and design ideas. These firms operated in Malta through Maltese agents.[14] The Ghezzi firm was responsible for the production of several high-quality works designed by Maltese designers at the turn of the twentieth century, as in the case of Abramo Gatt.

Coda

Ornament in Malta is naturally reflective of stylistic evolution. As the century wore on, the mid-century Revivalist taste gradually mutated towards greater eclecticism symptomatic of *fin de siècle*. After his death, Hyzler's Renaissance Revival was

13 Mark Sagona, "From Center to Periphery: International Collaboration in Mid-Nineteenth Century Rome and the Artistic Milieu for a Silver Commission for Malta," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 23, no.1 (Spring 2024).

14 Sagona, "The Ecclesiastical Decorative Arts," 249–251.

consolidated by his nephew Cesare Galdes and his sons, who in turn imbibed the currents of Baroque Revival. This Revivalist climate also showed a predilection for Neoclassical works, epitomised by the classical, antiquity-inspired creations of Vincenzo Belli the Younger in the 1850s. This was joined by rare but highly remarkable Gothic Revival imports connected to the great Pugin. The champion of Eclecticism was undoubtedly Nicola Zammit, but the decorative works of the painter Lazzaro Pisani (1854–1932) provide interesting insights into eclectic ornament, in which he was joined by a host of Maltese designers whose employment of ornament occasionally verges on the bizarre, as in the works of Vincenzo Bonnici (1821–65). The century concluded with the boldly agitated works of Paolo Bugeja (1840–1908) and his workshop, together with the younger masters such as the little-known but prolific Carmelo Teuma (ca. 1869–1916) and, perhaps most splendidly, with Abramo Gatt.

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Bio

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The Historiography of Ornament

Daniela Costa Dornfeld Saldanha

Abstract

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as numerous manuals and ornamental grammars began to circulate in the academic and artistic milieus, there was an expansion of the theoretical development of the history of ornament, especially the texts of Alois Riegl. The history of art, hitherto guided by discussions on painting, sculpture and architecture, began to consider new objects and their circulation between different cultures. John Ruskin was one of the first to contribute to the debate about ornament with revolutionary studies that addressed social aspects in a pioneering manner. For Ruskin, ornament was an essential element of architecture whose value lay in the work of humankind. There arose the understanding that the study of ornament could help to comprehend social issues and that its meanings and representations were aspects of permanence and memory transmission.

At the same time, the hierarchy of the arts lost its importance and the appreciation of the decorative arts began to grow, with each work of art considered a historical document. This article aims to discuss the historiography of ornamentation and the study of ornamental forms, aspects that are of great value for understanding their meanings.

In the late nineteenth century, there was a theoretical expansion of the history of ornament. A major contributor was Aloïs Riegl (1850–1905), whose texts started to circulate in the academic and artistic milieus among manuals and ornamental grammars by such writers as Owen Jones (1809––1874) and Eugène Grasset (1845–1917). As a result, art history started to consider new objects and their circulation and reception.

One of the first to start the debate on ornament was John Ruskin (1810–1900), for whom it was an essential element of architecture that helped to explain the world. Both Riegl and Ruskin believed that the study of ornament could help understand social issues related to aspects such as permanence and memory transmission.

Max Dvořák (1874–1921) was an author close to Riegl's ideas for whom there had never been any great stylistic ruptures or periods of decline in artistic production. The protection of monuments should include everything that could be considered a public artistic good in the broadest sense of the term.[1] What seemed to have less importance would usually require more attention. Everything that is not "exhaustively reproduced in art history manuals would be under threat".[2] In this sense, Dvořák's theories can be applied considering the history of ornament.

Also a reader of Riegl, Henri Focillon (1881–1943), in *The Life of Forms in Art* (*Vie des Formes*, 1934), questioned the evolutionary concept of style on the basis that several could coexist at the same time in close geographic vicinity.[3] He considered the concept of style as a dialectical or experimental process that developed in different ways in the various technical domains. Moreover, every form could be read in several ways, so the study of ornamental forms was of great value for revealing different meanings.

As a result of his academic and professional career, Riegl considered every piece of art a historical document, just like any other source. His eleven years of work and study on oriental carpets resulted in the publication of *Problems of Style* (*Stilfragen*, 1893), in which he posited the foundations of the history of ornament.[4] His empirical work came from direct contact with the pieces in the museum where he worked, the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry. His goal was to demonstrate the autonomy of decorative forms, despite the history of ornament written by Gottfried Semper (1803–1879) in *Der Stil* (1860), in which the latter suggested that ornamental patterns occurred spontaneously in different regions of the world based on existing techniques and materials.

Riegl wrote about the link between oriental and classical ornament. He concluded that Islamic arabesque was classical foliage in an orientalised form, thereby exhibiting the historical continuity of the idea according to Darwin's evolutionary theory.[5] For this reason, he considered the five thousand years of history of floral ornamentation as a single evolutionary period, allowing the decorative arts to be treated for the first time as a major topic in art history and avoiding the theory of materialism in vogue at the time that saw all artistic creation as imitation.

Ruskin also did not believe in imitation. In his opinion, humankind should work to create its own art and not copy the universe, which cannot be improved, only explained. Moreover, through his work, the artist writes the history of his own soul.[6]

According to Owen Jones in his *Grammar of Ornament* (1868), the issue of imitation in the decorative arts was a sign of the decline of art:

1 Max Dvořák, *Catecismo da preservação de monumentos*, trans. Valéria Alves Esteves Lima, Jens Baumgarten, Beatriz Mugayar Kühl (São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2008), 89.

2 Dvořák, *Catecismo*, 90.

3 Henri Focillon, *A vida das formas: seguido do Elogio da mão,* (Portugal: Edições 70, 2020), 18.

4 Otto Pätch, "Alois Riegl," in Aloïs Riegl. *Grammaire historique des arts plastiques*, trans. Éliane Kaufholz, (Paris, Klincksieck, 1978), X.

5 Pätch, "Aloïs Riegl," XII.

6 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice,* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1887), 352.

Figure 1
Drawing 38 by M. P. Verneuil in *La plante et ses applications ornementale*.

In the best periods of art, all ornament was rather based upon an observation of the principles which regulate the arrangement of form in nature, than on an attempt to imitate the absolute forms of those works; and that whenever this limit was exceeded in any art, it was one of the strongest symptoms of decline: true art consisting in idealizing, and not copying, the forms of nature.[7]

Eugène Grasset also questioned imitation when creating his method of ornamentation. In the introduction to his book *La plante et ses Applications ornementales* (1896),[8] he explains his intention to move forward by abandoning copies (Fig. 1).[9] Although copies could teach us some truths, in his opinion they prevented our ability to go beyond the narrow field of a single "style".[10]

The work of previous artists could teach important lessons, but he believed the mistake of his immediate predecessors was to have copied without transforming the creative spirit. Only cultural knowledge of the past could guarantee

7 Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, (London: Day and Son, 1856), 154.

8 Eugène Grasset (1845–1917) taught a generation of student architects and artists to value the decorative arts. He wrote articles and theoretical books on typography, plants and their ornamental applications. He published, with his students, *La Plante et ses aplications ornementale",* a compilation of nature drawings in various applications and materials. To his contemporaries, Grasset was responsible for renovating the decorative arts as a "modern" and multidisciplinary artist. Daniela Costa Dornfeld Saldanha, *Vila Penteado: estudo e análise iconográfica dos seus desenhos ornamentais,* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, 2017), 125.

9 Eugène Grasset, *La plante et ses aplications ornementale*, (Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, 1896), I.

10 Eugène Grasset, *Méthode de Composition Ornementale,* (Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, 1907), II.

an artist's ability to "work on the modern", since industry would eventually destroy their individuality.[11]

In the art of ornament, according to Grasset, inspiration does not depend on the object. There is no need for new forms to create a new system of arrangement; the natural known forms should be used. To innovate is to "preserve by modifying."[12] In these concepts, we see the similarity with Riegl's ideas about the acanthus leaf (Fig. 2). It would be pointless to set the goal of creating a new "20th-century style" since change should occur spontaneously in society.

On the issue of style, Otto Pächt (1902–1988), Dvořák's student at the second Vienna School, in his book *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts* (*Historische Grammatik der bildenden* Künste, 1966) emphasised Riegl's concept of a determining factor that conditions the specific appearance of a work of art or "style":

> **Each work of art whose style does not correspond to our taste has a disturbing quality of strangeness for us; to overcome this obstacle, we must abstract from our aesthetic prejudices and try to detect a raison d'être, a historical reason for the existence of each work of the past. This means understanding it in light of the historical conditions in which it developed, with the hope of discovering the true determining factor that shaped it as it appears to us.**
>
> **If we succeed, which is not easy, the work of art will have lost its unsettling strangeness, and we will have acquired an appreciation of the inner necessity in its whole and in its parts, which we had previously experienced only in artistic creations that satisfy our own taste.[13]**

Dvořák also warned about the consequences of a predilection for a certain style and the rejection of all others as showing a lack of taste.[14] For example, the Baroque style was criticised. This kind of "artistic prejudice"[15] can result in the loss of a part of the history of ornament.

Dvořák, who had completed his studies in Vienna, also at the Institute of Historical Research, like Riegl did not believe in the legitimacy of a single style. In his opinion, "art should not be judged according to a universal formula, but evaluated according to artistic intentions and productions, which vary depending on periods and countries."[16] The production of any given time should be respected. He knew that something that was not yet considered remarkable in his era could become valid in the future, like Baroque art. After all, everything that art creates constitutes "the patrimony of the spiritual development of humanity".[17]

According to Riegl, styles changed as aesthetic ideals changed, an idea he relates with the term *Kunstwollen*. For instance, the Romans built, sculpted and painted differently not because they could not do better, but because they were aiming for something truly different. There is the desire in this effort, or the intention, or the notion of *Kunstwollen*, a concept that is present in various forms of human expression.

Several theorists, including Dvořák, developed interpretations of Riegl's *Kunstwollen* concept. According to Pätch, this abstract concept is elaborated by an animist process, conceived as other collective characterisations, as a spirit of an era, or the artistic genius of a culture.[18]

Grasset also elaborated a concept of the creative principle, or *le principe créateur*, which has similarities with *Kunstwollen*. This creative principle lies behind the development of every piece of art. Thus, natural life can be organised and adapted by the artist at will, according to his or her needs. This, he argued, was true originality.[19]

11 Grasset, *Méthode,* V.
12 Grasset, *Méthode,* V.
13 Pätch, "Aloïs Riegl," XV.
14 Dvořák, *Catecismo*, 90.
15 Dvořák, *Catecismo*, 91.
16 Dvořák, *Catecismo*, 92.
17 Dvořák, *Catecismo*, 101.
18 Pätch, "Alois Riegl," XXI.
19 Grasset, *Méthode,* V.

Figure 2
Acanthus leaves, Athens, Greece, 2023.
© Daniela Costa Dornfeld Saldanha.

In his *Ornamental Composition Method* (*Méthode de composition ornementale*, 1905), Grasset calls the beginning of his method *Exercice de la Volonté réfléchie,*[20] which supposes a reference to *Kunstwollen*, often translated into French as *volonté artistique*. He explained how nothing in nature and in the universe happens at random. In art, the reflective will proceeds as a creation of humankind acting simultaneously with nature. It is "the affirmation of our existence and our faculties."[21]

When thinking about national identity, as discussed in the period, Riegl believed that great artists do not create a national tradition but are an integral part of it. They are those who manage to represent the *Kunstwollen* of their country and their time. The great artist establishes direct contact with international artistic movements and assimilates their lessons.[22]

In addition, the theme of decorative arts was relatively new, and Riegl played an important role by proposing their division into the visual arts and surface arts. The surface arts, such as drawing and painting, required creativity, as they were based on contours and not three-dimensionality. Humankind had to develop its capacity for representation to free itself from the "rigid observance of nature".[23]

Therefore, nature continued to be the model for artistic forms when these forms lost the dimension of depth and introduced a boundary line. The line became an instrument of creation without necessarily a complete model of nature, following the laws of symmetry and rhythm.

Riegl believed that the relationship between artistic forms and *nature corporeal phenomena* also worked for so-called geometric forms. And that it arose spontaneously everywhere.

He questioned the theories on the technical-material origins of the arts, arguing that it is artistic will rather than material or technique that determines them. Compelling proof of this were the bas-relief engravings on the bones of cave dwellers, who, to create an animal image on a dead material such as a bone invented an appropriate technique. But the art did not arise from the technique and the artistic impulse existed before the invention. At the same time, the need for ornament was elementary.[24] It was not the tool or the technique that drove invention but the creative thought that wanted more space and greater cultural capacity, exactly as Ruskin noted. This was probably for the advantages of planimetric structuring in technical realisation and artistic use.

As Riegl explained, "the research of ornamentation becomes more solid from the moment plants are admitted as decorative motifs. The number of plant species capable of being reproduced is infinitely greater than that of abstract symmetrical figures, which are limited to the triangle, the circle, the rhombus and some others."[25]

Geometric shapes were widely used in surface adornments because they are easier to make than human or animal figures. Nevertheless, plant ornaments were soon used due to the variety of species and quickly geometrised, as Grasset did in his method of ornamental composition.

As a result, Riegl emphasises the importance of studying ornament for understanding civilizations, raising – in his book *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament* (*Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*, 1893) – a series of questions from observation of the decorative arts. For example, in the book *The Grammar of the Lotus*

20 Grasset, *Méthode,* XII.

21 Grasset, *Méthode,* XIII.

22 Pätch, "Alois Riegl," XX.

23 Aloïs Riegl, *Problemas de estilo: fundamentos para una historia de la ornamentación*, trans. Federico Miguel Saller, (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili S.A., 1980), 9.

24 Riegl. *Problemas de estilo*, 21.

25 Aloïs Riegl, "Questões de estilo: fundamentos de uma história da ornamentação (1893)," in Jacqueline Lichtenstein, org., *A pintura – Vol.11: As escolas e o problema de estilo*, trans. Magnólia Costa. (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2013), 134.

(1891) by William Henry Goodyear (1846–1923),[26] an American art historian and the first curator of the Metropolitan Museum of New York who was the first researcher to explain that all old plant ornamentations were a development of the ancient Egyptian lotus motif. This was possible even without considering Semper's technical-material theory of the birth of art.

For Goodyear, as well as for Riegl, plant ornaments played a decisive role in ancient ornamentation, including for a "correct appreciation of this ornamentation throughout the history of decorative arts".[27] At the same time, Goodyear considered the Greeks responsible for evolving these motifs into pure formal beauty. However, both he and other researchers ignored another contribution of the Greeks: the invention of entangled decorative vegetable motifs representing movement and rhythm.

Riegl saw the history of ornament as akin to the tying of the segments of a cut wire, the joining of elements that were once separated by a unifying point of view. He knew that he was meddling with deep-seated concepts and that other authors would contest his ideas.

For Pächt, not only was the principle of continuity saved and chance discredited as a determining factor in stylistic development, but something even more important was responsible: a new notion of the relationship between art and reality. The new thesis was that visual experiences on the part of the artist could become fruitful and relevant only if they correspond to the requirements of the stylistic situation in a particular historical moment.[28]

Pächt points out that, for Riegl, "nature observation was not the cause of artistic novelty; the really determining factor could not be found in an impulse from outside, but in what appeared to be the driving and controlling forces within the artistic development. And if it is so, then our primary task is not to watch the encounters of chance in history, but to study the stylistic tendencies and their orientation."[29]

Regarding ornament, Focillon found his own logic of image schematisation, reducing the natural elements to geometric forms. Considering forms in space, Focillon classified space as the place of the artwork and regarded ornamental art as the first alphabet of human thought to confront space: "So, it is also in the strange realm of ornament and in all the art that draws and submits to ornament the schematization of images. This is because the essence of ornament consists in being able to reduce itself to the purest forms of intelligibility, and that geometric reasoning applies without defect to the analysis of the relations between the parties."[30]

For Focillon, when studying the relationship between stylistic and historical development, the influence exerted by natural and social means on the life of forms must be considered.

Despite all the aforementioned approaches to the historiographical appreciation of ornament, it is relevant to note how many other authors treated it in a pejorative manner. As Massimo Carboni wrote:

Though ornament is often discussed in terms of embellishment, of "decoration" in the pejorative sense of the word, the issues at stake in it are actually fundamental. Apparently marginal and secondary, ornament really stands at the intersection between ethics and esthetics, breaking apart familiar value systems and provoking deep psychic responses. It cannot be reduced to innocuous "style". [31]

26 William Henry Goodyear, *The Grammar of the Lotus: A New History of Classic Ornament as a Development of Sun Worship,* (London: Sampason Low, Marston and Co., 1891).

27 Riegl, "Questões de estilo," 135.

28 Otto Pätch, "Art Historians and Art Critics – vi: Alois Riegl," *Burlington Magazine* 105, no. 722 (May 1963): 189

29 Otto Pätch, "Art Historians," 189.

30 Henri Focillon, *A vida das formas,* 19.

31 Massimo Carboni, "Infinite ornament," *Artforum* 30, no.1 (September 1991), trans. Marguerite Shore. https://www.artforum.com/features/infinite-ornament-204022

For Carboni, ornament is “primary for humans, almost a genetic impulse”.[32] It is the suggestion of something that we intuitively feel, related to the antagonistic notions of true and false, authentic and derivative. Furthermore, ornament “makes no effort to resist or stand out from the passage of time, but becomes part of time’s flow”.[33]

Far from exhausting the questions raised with the texts cited, this presentation highlights the relevance of the concepts and their discussion.

All of the authors mentioned praised the value of studying ornament as a historical source using empirical research and methodologies that are valid nowadays. All texts tend to eliminate prejudices in classifications of styles, typical of the nineteenth century, which could elect only a few productions to be preserved, limiting the construction of art historiography.

All the authors showed that the study of ornament can raise important questions and provide answers. Ornament includes information about the societies of the past, containing historical and artistic values, and must thus be urgently preserved.

32 Carboni, “Infinite ornament.”
33 Carboni, “Infinite ornament.”

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Bio

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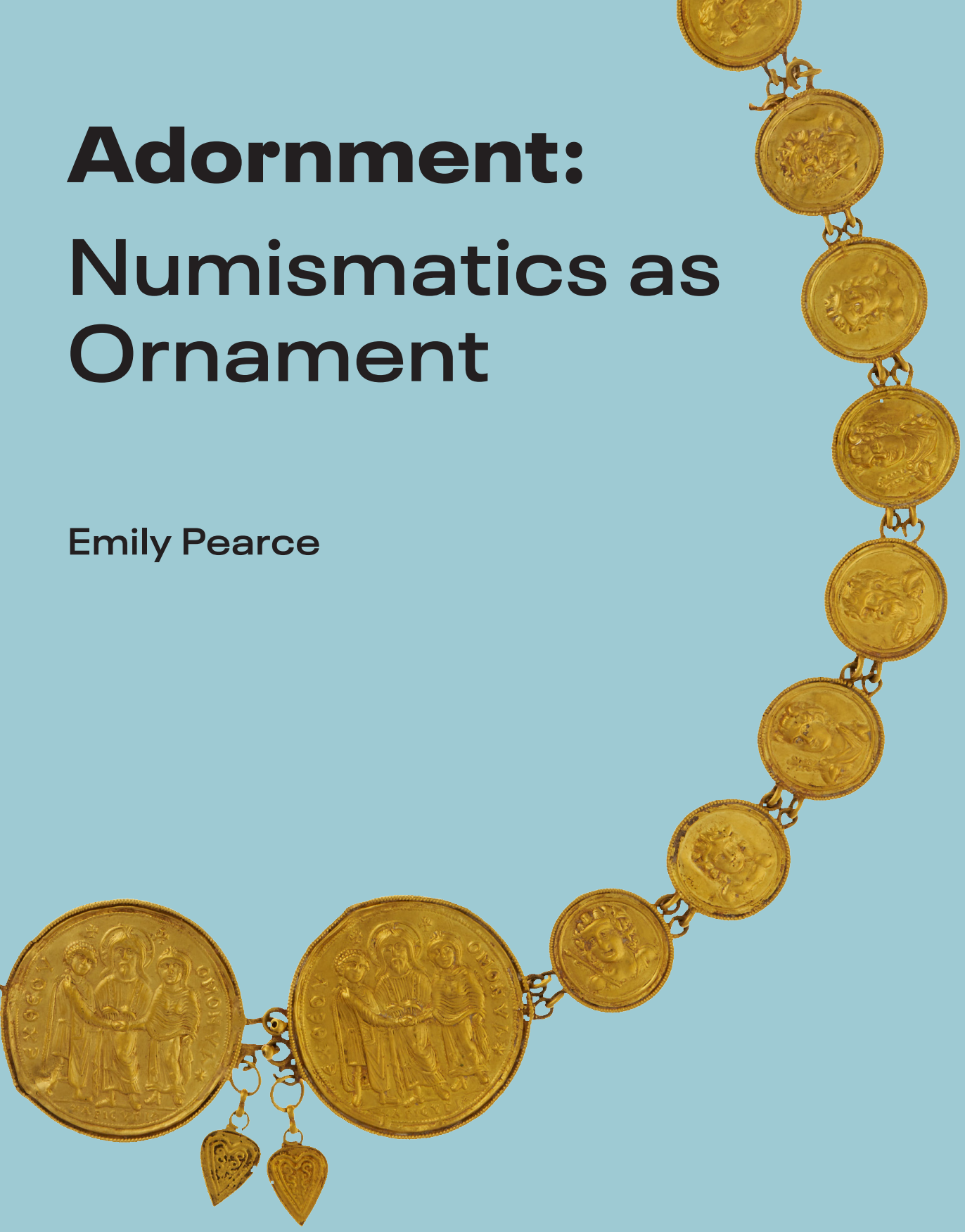
Adornment:

Numismatics as Ornament

Emily Pearce



Abstract

Coins have been used to decorate humans for thousands of years. From pierced coins turned into venerable pendants to chain-mail-like armor, coinage has existed outside the realm of transaction to offer humankind custom ornamentation. But the role of numismatics as ornament goes beyond the bounds of personal adornment. Coins appear as decorations, enhancing architectural structures, municipal interiors, and the walls of homes. The idea of using literal wealth to communicate status and class is transposed from adorning bodies in gold and silver to decorating physical spaces with precious coinage. Beginning in the mid-19th century, the height of Japonisme in the West, coinage was further used ornamentally to communicate ideas of exoticism, travel, and opulence. Displays of Tokugawa-era (徳川幕府, 1603-1868) coinage—hung in ornately carved cinnabar frames or depicted on lacquerware boxes—were used as ornament in homes and offices across Europe and the United States to communicate an appreciation for and understanding of what was deemed high-class art forms. This is intensified when appreciated as objects created by Japanese craftsmen for tourist consumption.

This paper will explore how coins came to be used as ornament and how that obscures their historical usefulness as currency. This is compounded by the frequent use of counterfeit coins in façade ornamentation and decorative arts. Exploring these themes and ideas in Lisbon is particularly reflective as Portugal was the initial point of contact between Europeans and Japanese merchants during the 16th century Nanban trade era.

Humans have used coins for stylistic self-expression for thousands of years. From pierced coins turned into venerable pendants to chain-mail-like armor, coinage has existed outside the realm of transaction to offer humankind custom ornamentation. But the role of numismatics as ornament goes beyond the bounds of personal adornment. Coins appear as decorations, enhancing architectural structures, municipal interiors, and the walls of homes. The concept of using objects of wealth to communicate status and class is transposed from adorning bodies in gold, silver, and copper to decorating physical spaces with precious metal. This paper offers a preliminary introduction to coins as ornament and how that might obscure the historical interpretation of currency. Interpretations are additionally compounded by the frequent use of counterfeit coins in façade ornamentation and the decorative arts.

Nothing communicates value quite like coinage. Coins, in their various forms, have stood as emblems of wealth and value since, at least, the seventh century B.C.E.. With some of the oldest coins in existence struck on planchets formed of electrum, a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver, the appreciation for these objects was born of their pecuniary role, but also their visual richness. That connection between economic value and visual allure has historically been intensified by the images that decorate these coins—notably depictions of religious entities, royalty, even architectural edifices. The transition from objects of transaction to objects of adornment is a natural progression. But this story goes further. To illustrate the use of numismatics as elements of both adornment and ornament, three cultural practices will be explored using material culture as evidence: the jewelry of Byzantium (3rd-7th centuries), the dress and wall decorations of the Pacific Northwest (16–19th centuries), and the consumption of Japonisme by the middle- and working-class public of the United States (19th century).

Byzantium

In the Roman world, employing coinage in jewelry became la mode during the third century and dominated Byzantine fashion well into the seventh century. Byzantine craftsmen used Roman coins and medals as pendant-like nuclei on necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. The Metropolitan Museum of Art displays one such necklace given by James Pierpont Morgan in 1917 (Fig. 1). The gold necklace is embellished with two complementary aurei minted under the Emperor Alexander Severus in A.D. 222 (left) and A.D. 228 (right). On both examples, the emperor is depicted in profile, wearing armor and crowned with a laurel wreath. Coins and medallions were also used in decorative belts or girdles. Perhaps the most famous is the so-called Kyrenia Girdle, also housed at the Metropolitan (Fig. 2).

The girdle was discovered in 1902 just west of Kyrenia, a city along the northern coast of Cyprus.[1] The four medallions that comprise the center-most decoration are of the same type (meaning they were produced using the same obverse and reverse dies) as those minted under Emperor Maurice Tiberius (582–602) and likely the last gold medallions produced by the imperial mint.[2] The medallions are soldered into gold mountings and surrounded by circlets of gold-beaded wire. The *solidi*, while all the same denomination, reflect the minting of coins representing 6 emperors: one of Theodosius II (402–450), three of co-rulers Justin I and Justinian (April–August 527), one of co-rulers Justin II and Tiberius II (September––October 578), and eight of Maurice Tiberius (582–602).[3] Gold rings or chains connect the medallions and coins.

While the Metropolitan currently displays the girdle as a single object, in the original photos published by numismatist Philip Grierson in his 1955

1 O. M. Dalton, "Byzantine Plate and Jewelry from Cyprus in Mr. Morgan's Collection," *Burlington Magazine,* X, 1906–7, 358.

2 Philip Grierson, "The Kyrenia Girdle of Byzantine Medallions and Solidi," *The Numismatic Chronicle,* Ser. 6, vol. 15 (1955): 62.

3 Grierson, "The Kyrenia Girdle", 63-65.

Figure 1
Gold necklace with coin pendants, 3rd century CE.
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.1655.

Figure 2
Girdle with coins and medallions, ca. 583, reassembled after discovery.
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917. Purchase, Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Stephen K. Scher and Mrs. Maxime L. Hermanos Gifts, Rogers Fund, and funds from various donors, 1991. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.147; 1991.136.

article in The Numismatic Chronicle, the girdle is disconnected and incomplete. This separation out of an object of adornment highlights each individual coin's rarity in its numismatic context as opposed to their joined role as ornamentation. Each coin used in the girdle is exceptionally rare, save one.[4] The most uncommon coin, that of Justin II and Tiberius II, was, in fact, seized by the Cypriot police after it had left Cyprus and was returned to the Nicosia Museum as a national treasure (J.441).[5] The only other known example of this coin resides in the British Museum.[6]

The coins and medals in the Kyrenia girdle are genuine, meaning the coins were minted for circulation and the medals were struck by the imperial mint for official distribution.[7] This is odd when compared with other contemporary belts of similar construction. Dumbarton Oaks (DO) offers an obvious comparison in the sixth–seventh century marriage belt from the collection of Mildred Barnes Bliss and Robert Woods Bliss (Fig. 3).[8] The DO belt is constructed of pseudo-medallions and medalets; products of a goldsmith, rather than the imperial mint. The planchets are significantly thinner than the medallions on the Kyrenia girdle, created by a smith hammering the metal into molds. This gives the reverse side an inverse representation of the obverse image, unlike the two-sided, struck medals of Maurice Tiberius on the Kyrenia girdle. The pseudo-numismatic pieces use the form of Byzantine coins and medals to communicate luxury and wealth, but the iconography deviates from expected numismatic

4 "A New Addition to the Kyrenia Girdle," CNG: Classical Numismatic Group, LLC, June 25, 2024, https://cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=374163

5 Grierson, "The Kyrenia Girdle", 65.

6 Justin II and Tiberius II Constantine, *Solidus*, 565–582, gold, 3.991 g. British Museum Collection, London, England, museum number 1938,1002.1.

7 Grierson, "The Kyrenia Girdle", 59.

8 Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C., catalog number BZ.1937.33. The belt, which is made of gold and measures 4.8 × 75.5 cm, was on display at Dumbarton Oaks in the exhibition *Rich in Blessings: Wealth and the Late Antique Household*, November 17, 2023–June 9, 2024.

Figure 3
Marriage belt, 6–7th century, Mildred Barnes Bliss and Robert Woods Bliss. Dumbarton Oaks, BZ.1937.33.

Figure 4
Cuirass (body armor) covered with Chinese coins, ca. 1800-1830, Dr. Alonzo Eugene Austin, Jr. and Sarah H. (Frances Hall) Austin.
National Museum of the American Indian, 16/8287.

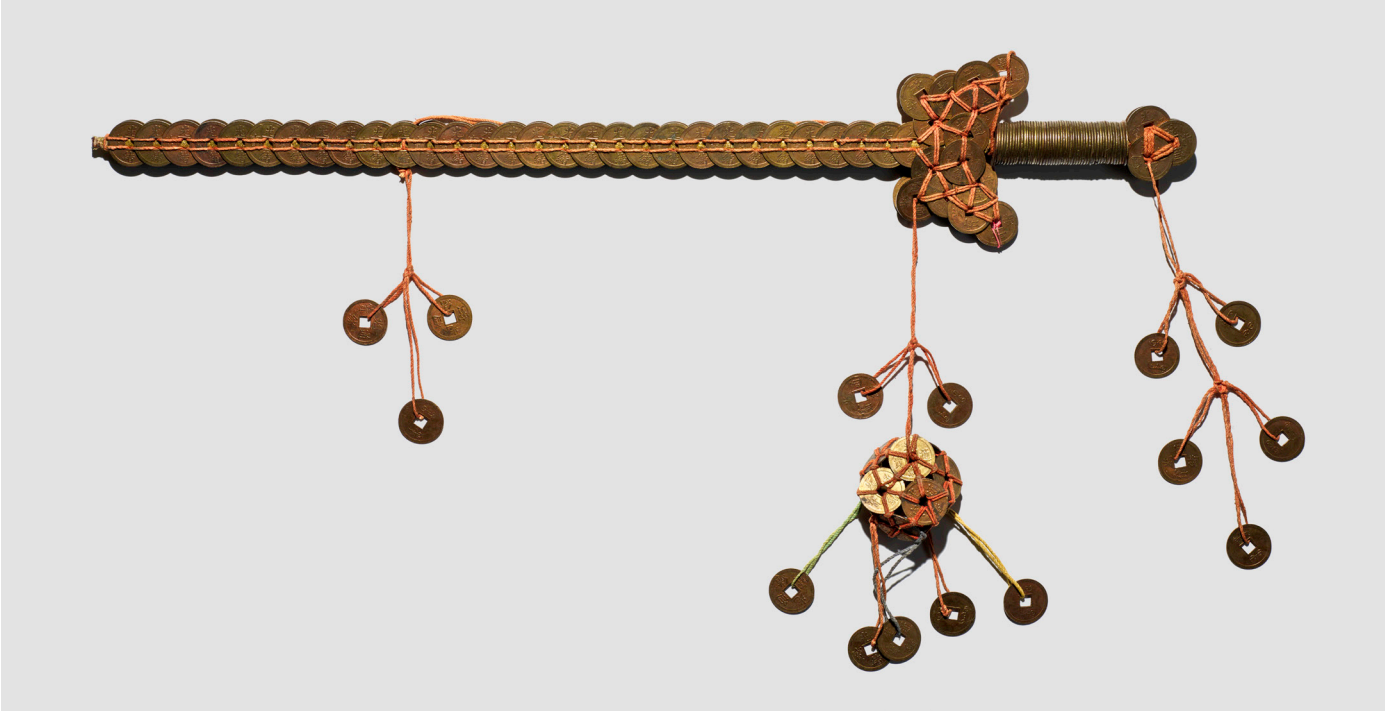


Figure 5
Coin Sword, n.d. (ca. 1860), J. Watts de Peyster. National Museum of American History, NU.231800.

norms.[9] Still rich in imagery, the marriage belt does not communicate the same gravitas of prestige and value as the Kyrenia Girdle, largely due to the difference between circulatable wealth and adornment.

The Pacific Northwest

Like those in Byzantium, Indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest of North America used coins as elements of dress. While the glitz of Roman gold operated as jewel-like declarations of wealth and social position in Byzantium, the bronze and copper coins of East Asia adorned the dress and armor of Indigenous communities as elements of utility and status. East Asian coins on Tlingit armor are particularly prevalent, likely due to the community's residence in the coastal region of Alaska and Western Canada, a trade route for Manila galleons traveling from the Spanish East Indies to Mexico. The ample interactions with Russian merchants in the fur trade was another point of exchange for accumulating these coins.[10]

9 Rather than imperial portraits, the images on the belt's pseudo-medallions and medalets employ images of Christian and pagan narratives and figures, often syncretizing the two.

10 James Mooney, Todd Kristensen, and Keary Walde, "Making your Cash go a Long Way: Five Chinese Coins in the Southern Yukon and Northwestern British Columbia," *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* 10, no. 1–2 (2012): 76.

East Asian coins were employed on armor to act as a protective layer, like the sheet metal of a breastplate.

Tommy Joseph, a member of the Eagle Moiety, Kaagwaantaan Tlingit clan, and a master Tlingit carver has spent years conducting research for a more complete understanding and narrative of the role of coinage on Tlingit and other communities' armor in the Pacific Northwest. Joseph describes the use of Chinese coins "like chainmail" atop a leather vest.[11] This is corroborated by Russian accounts of a battle between Russian merchants and the Tlingit in a letter from the famed Russian fur trader Aleksander Baranov (1747–1819) to maritime merchant Greigory Shelikhov noting the use of coins on Tlingit armor for their effective protection against musket fire.[12] This Tlingit armor (called kagís kageit) was donated to the National Museum of the American Indian in 1930 but collected from coastal Alaska in the early 1800s by the non-Indian Alonzo Eugene Austin (Fig. 4). The body of the kagís kageit is constructed of Walrus skin and hide. On top of this base, Chinese coins are stitched in a linear pattern. Notably, the coins are stitched on rather than hanging, retaining their shape and form and creating a solid line of metal overlay.

East Asian coinages were further used in the Northwest to adorn non-armor dress and ceremonial costume. The bridal headdresses of the Wishham (Tlakluit) people, for example, used Chinese coins to create a hanging decorative fringe,

Fig. 6
日本古金銀貨幣 | Japanese old gold and silver coins, 1862.
Transfer from the Yale University Library Numismatic Collection, 2001.
Yale University Art Gallery, 2001.87.65009.

11 Tommy Joseph, "Constructing Tlingit Armor: Tommy Joseph at TEDxSitka," filmed July 20, 2013 in Sitka, Tedx video, 7:09–7:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErDsz3g3zAg

12 For the Russian battle account, see the letter from Aleksander Baranov to G.I. Shelikhov, July 24, 1793, reprinted in Dauenhauer et al., Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká, 56.

adorning the bride with elements of literal wealth, albeit in a foreign context.[13] It is clear from the consistent use of the same coin types that the selection of coins employed was important and somewhat accessible by artisans, though judgement parameters are difficult if not impossible to accurately apply due to lack of written sources by artisans and their patrons. Most East Asian coins used to create dress and decoration are of Chinese origin. Of these, almost all are coins cast under China's Qing Dynasty (1644–1911).[14] While appreciated as objects of foreign commerce, there is little to no evidence suggesting an economic use within North American Northwest communities.[15] Instead of being used as transactional objects, East Asian coins held far more value in non-economic uses including adornment and ornament.

These same communities in the Pacific Northwest employed East Asian coinages to decorate architectural structures and room interiors. The majority of these items are ceremonial objects, as the purpose of creation was equally shared between architectural ornamentation and religious practice. Decorations comprised of specific Chinese coins—typically Wuzhu coins from the Han dynasty and wén from the Tang, Song, and Kangi Xi—were connected with red and yellow thread to create large, intricate objects like swords and decorative hangings.

Traditions built upon these decorative hangings originate largely in southern China but were quickly popularized in 18–19th century Chinese and proto-Chinese communities in the United States and Canada. The presence of these types of ornament illustrates not just the later emigration of Chinese peoples to western North America but also the earlier interaction and adoption of cultural practices. As a decidedly Taoist practice, the hanging of coin swords and rings communicates the transfer of value—spiritual and aesthetic rather than economic—between North American communities and Asian traders, visitors, and immigrants (Fig. 5).

Japonisme and the Euro-centric West

Like these ornaments constructed of East Asian coinage, the 19th century also introduced East Asian aesthetic values into decoration to first European and then global peoples. While Japanese porcelain and lacquerware were long admired and collected by European royalty, the burst of interest after Japan's forced opening in 1853 began largely with public appreciation for ukiyo-e prints.[16] Japonisme (Japanism), a term coined in 1872 by French art critic Philippe Burty, grew from the swelling interest artists and patrons in Paris and London developed for Japanese imported goods.[17]

Beginning in the mid-19th century, the height of Japonisme in the West, coinage was used ornamentally to communicate ideas of exoticism, travel, and opulence. Displays of Tokugawa-era (徳川幕府, 1603–1868) coinage—depicted on lacquerware boxes or hung in ornately carved

13 Edward S. Curtis, *Portraits from North American Indian Life*, (New York: American Museum of Natural History and Outerbridge/Lazard, 1972), 166; Edward S. Curtis, *Indian Days of the Long Ago*, (New York: Tamarack Press, 1975), 87. While Curtis's writings are helpful in their documentation of coin usage in dress and decorative elements, it should be noted that much of the nomenclature used is outdated.

14 Coins of the Qing Dynasty have been widespread since the dynasty's reign due to the large number cast as well as ever-growing global trade between the 17th and 20th centuries. Their presence in these communities is not odd, merely specific.

15 Grant Keddie, "The Question of Asiatic Objects on the North Pacific Coast of America: Historic or Prehistoric?" *Contributions to Human History,* no. 3 (March 1990): 3–4.

16 Monkia Bincsik, "European collectors and Japanese merchants of lacquer in 'Old Japan': Collecting Japanese lacquer art in the Meiji period (1868–1912)," *Journal of the History of Collections 20,* no. 2 (November 2008): 222–223.

17 Philippe Burty, "Japonisme," in *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique* (Librairie de l'Eau-Forte, June 15, 1872).

cinnabar frames—were used as ornaments in homes, offices, and palaces across Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States to communicate an appreciation for and understanding of what was deemed high-class art. The spread of traditional Japanese arts to Europe was amplified by Japan's participation in the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873. This continued in the continental United States at the 1876 Philadelphia International Exhibition and specifically the incredible success of the respective Chinese and Japanese delegations.

These shadow-box-like displays are quite simple in construction: a series of Tokugawa-era (徳川幕府, 1603–1868) coins mounted using metal clamps or an adhesive (sometimes both) to a wooden backboard upholstered in a velvet-like fabric (Fig. 6). Displays also appear to follow a compositional pattern, situating certain objects beside others and highlighting the same pieces within the frames (notably the central obans). Two of each type of coin are mounted side-by-side, when space permits, to offer a comparison of the objects' obverse and reverse faces. Each paring is accompanied by a small twill-paper label that records the object's name, in English characters and Japanese kanji, with the weight and metal type. Despite a clear dedication to presentation of the coins, there are several jarring elements to each frame. First, all objects within them are imitations. Second, it is not unusual for a written kanji character, an inscription on a coin, or even the orientation of a coin to be incorrect —or not real.

Such lackadaisical attention to detail implies two things: that these objects were created for a non-Japanese speaking audience and that they were not marketed at numismatists. These are not transactional objects in the sense that these coins were not made to circulate, and, therefore, they are not "counterfeit" in an economic sense. As objects for ornamentation, however, they excel—their faces appearing as gold and silver, replicating a long-standing Western fantasy about "Oriental" opulence and Japanese exoticism celebrated in the Japonisme-inspired fine arts and in gold and silver ornamentation.

In each of these examples, something born of utility is given new value outside the confines of transaction and economics. Coins intended to cultivate exchange are instead repurposed to embody the form and design of elements of compositional importance—valued for their aesthetic beauty as renewed and designed raw materials. This is particularly true of the final example, the framed Tokugawa coins, where the coins themselves are counterfeit and have no transactional value despite appearances to the contrary. The transmutation of value from literal money into an ornament does not remove the objects' usefulness but shifts it.

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Bio

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At Yale, Emily utilizes religious regalia and dress as an interpretive lens through which to allow ancient coinage to speak.

Ornament and Evolution in the Bethnal Green Museum's Collection of Animal Products: 1872–1928

Pandora Syperek

Abstract

This article considers the role of ornament in the lives of animals and in human visual-material culture, and its theorisation in relation to evolution and aesthetics. It focuses on the Victoria and Albert Museum's historical Animal Products Collection, which emerged out of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and was displayed at the South Kensington Museum's Bethnal Green branch from 1872 to 1928. The few existing analyses consider the collection in relation to industry and sustainability but overlook its decorative items, which ranged from contemporary European jewellery made from hummingbird heads and beetle wings to an array of objects crafted with various animal materials from cultures around the world. Ornament suggests an excess to survival that challenged A.R. Wallace and Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection (1858). But despite a recent revival of Darwin's alternative theory of sexual selection, which attributed the appeal of bird plumage in human fashions to shared evolutionary processes (1871), the intra-species significance of self-fashioning with, for example, mother-of-pearl is less evident.

The various purposes of so-called ornament, among species and cultures, complicate theories of beauty and thereby open up animal products to an analysis that goes beyond a binary examination of function and decoration and corresponding hierarchies in both evolution and design.

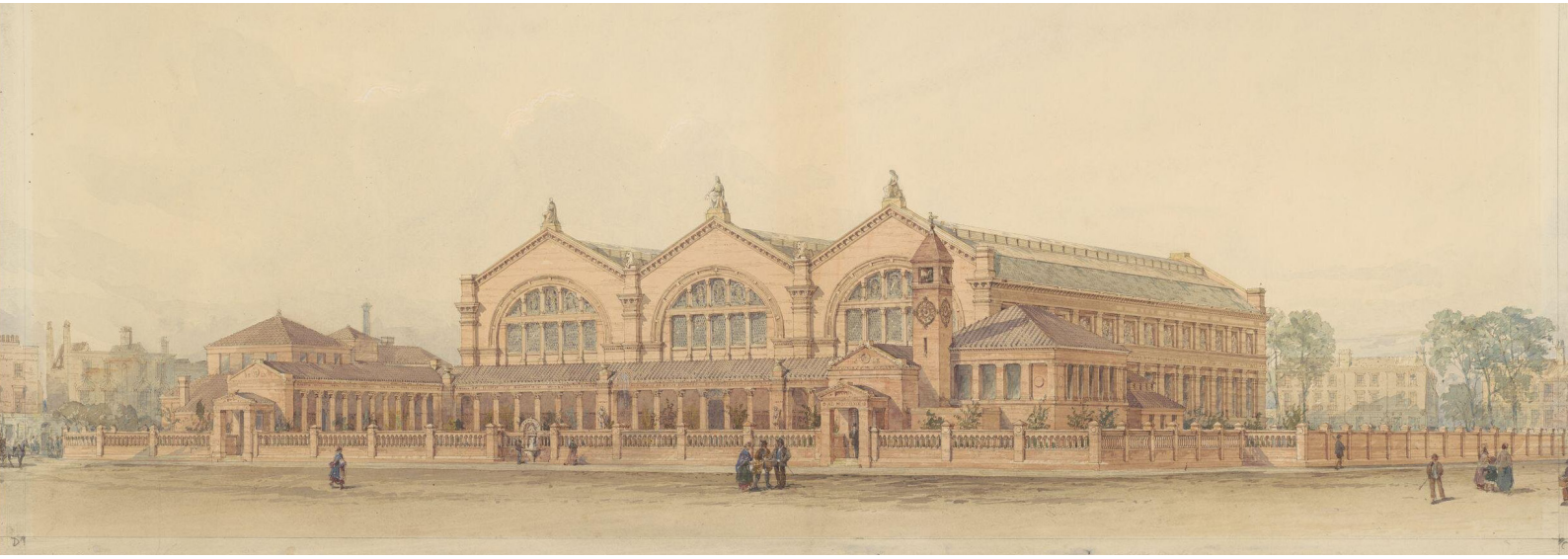

Figure 1
J. W. Wild, Design for the Bethnal Green Museum, watercolour, ca. 1865–1871.
Victoria and Albert Museum. V&A: D.738-1905.

Traditionally, design and evolution have been viewed in opposition. The first supposes human or even divine agency, as in "intelligent design" propagated through the widespread belief in natural theology in nineteenth-century Britain.[1] The other is seen as a result of natural forces, or natural *selection*, as argued by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace in 1858 and formalised in Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* the following year.[2]

However, as the idea of nature as separate from humanity dissipates,[3] especially given ongoing anthropogenic environmental breakdown, this distinction between design as an exclusively human activity and the 'natural' process of evolution is being called into question. On the one hand, while the specific iterations of the human – white, male, middle to upper class and non-disabled – that have informed design history demonstrate the exclusions that have shaped this largely Eurocentric discipline, the very concept of design may be seen as advocating human exceptionalism. On the other hand, this distinction is challenged by conceptions of design as a more-than-human process and of our world as a product of co-design between human and nonhuman agents. This line of thought, informed by posthumanist and new materialist

1 Such widespread belief largely corresponded to William Paley's teleological argument presented in *Natural Theology* (1802), edited by Matthew D. Eddy and David Knight (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

2 Charles Darwin and A.R. Wallace, "On the Tendency of Species to form Varieties; and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection," *Journal of the Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London. Zoology*, no. 3 (1858): 45–62. doi:10.1111/j.1096-3642.1858.tb02500.x; Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), ed. Gillian Beer, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3 See Donna Jeanne Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003) and Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

philosophies, themselves influenced significantly by indigenous cosmologies,[4] may be useful for navigating life in the so-called Anthropocene, as evidenced, for example, by the rise of multi-species design and bio-design.[5] Less attention, however, has been given to more-than-human agency within historical design and material culture.

The Victoria and Albert Museum's historical Animal Products Collection derived from the Great Exhibition of 1851 and was displayed in the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A) before its removal to the museum's Bethnal Green branch from 1872 to 1928. The legacy of the collection not only destabilised a dualistic notion of design and evolution, as it showcased objects and materials created through a combination of human and nonhuman actions, but furthermore complicated long-standing conceptions of ornament within both aesthetics and biology. These originated in mid-nineteenth-century evolutionary theory and reached their peak in Adolf Loos's notorious 1908 treatise "Ornament and Crime",[6] which proceeded to influence design history thereafter and ever since. In his profoundly racist pseudo-scientific study, Loos lambasted what he regarded as excessive ornamentation in design and architecture as indicative of evolutionary lag. The legacy of Loos's view of ornament as anathema to modern design finds parallels in post-Darwinian arguments within evolutionary biology, which not only informed twentieth-century science but continue to linger in interwoven concepts of evolution and aesthetics. This genealogy has important implications for "taste", the development and teaching of which were foundational to the South Kensington Museum. Here I take these implications to their logical conclusion, considering the Bethnal Green Museum's Animal Products Collection in relation to prevalent ideas about evolution and design to evaluate how evolutionary theory has intersected with ornament and consequently how this may shed light on the role of evolutionary aesthetics within museology.

Ecology of a Collection

The Animal Products Collection comprised part of the legacy of the Great Exhibition's collection of "raw materials" and its division into three realms – with vegetable products and mineral products transferred to the Museum of Economic Botany at Kew and the Museum of Practical Geology in Jermyn Street, respectively.[7] Housed in the South Kensington Museum since its opening in 1857, along with the Food Collection, the Animal Products were destined for the museum's new outpost in Bethnal Green, also known as the East London Museum of Science and Art. Despite the collections' assiduous curation by the journalist and industrialist Peter Lund Simmonds, the popular image of the Bethnal Green Museum came to be that of "a mere refuge for specimens and spectators who have no other place in which to find rest and shelter"[8] and an "asylum for South Kensington refuse".[9] This was partly accurate, as the building's central structure was designed around the discarded architecture of the 1862 International Exhibition site in South Kensington, disparagingly referred to as the

4 Zoe Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take on the Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' is just another word for colonialism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2016): 4–22.

5 Yoko Akama, Ann Light and Takahito Kamihira, "Expanding Participation to Design with More-Than-Human Concerns," in *Proceedings of the 16th Participatory Design Conference 2020 - Participation(s) Otherwise (PDC '20)*, 1–11. doi:10.1145/3385010.3385016; William Myers, *Bio Design: Nature, Science, Creativity* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018).

6 Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime," in Loos, *Ornament and Crime* (London: Penguin, 2019).

7 Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, *Bethnal Green Branch of the South Kensington Museum: A Brief Guide to the Animal Products Collection*, 1st ed. (G.E. Eyre & William Spottiswoode, 1872), 9.

8 *Daily Mail*, 1879, quoted in Anthony Burton, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A, 1999).

9 Fun, 6 July 1872, quoted in Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 182.

"Brompton Boilers" (Fig. 1).[10] Meanwhile, the soiled image of the Bethnal Green Museum was supported by the Waste Products Collection being displayed there three years after the museum opened. And yet, like its resourceful architecture, this collection also fostered the Bethnal Green Branch's status as an early museological "recycling project".[11] Formed out of the Animal Products Collection by Simmonds, the waste products in this collection have proven of recent interest to several scholars as examples of early ideas about sustainability and their intertwining with capital.[12]

The Animal Products like other collections at Bethnal Green were considered, according to the collection's first catalogue, of "great practical benefit for the manufacturing and mercantile communities if systematically arranged for the purposes of reference".[13] Objects in the collection were intended to illustrate accompanying texts and were organised according to product or "substance" rather than species, distinguishing the collection from natural history, although taxidermy and other preserved specimens were included in the displays for illustrative purposes.[14] Displays were arranged, Simmonds wrote, "to proceed step by step from the raw material, through the various stages of manufacture, up to the finished product".[15] A current display in the V&A South Kensington of the sequential transformation of a shell into a cameo portrait by James Ronca replicates this evolutionary display model (Fig. 2).[16]

Figure 2
James Ronca, *Process set, bull's mouth shell, showing the making of a Shell Cameo of the Artist J ohn Everett Millais*, ca. 1850–90.
Victoria and Albert Museum. V&A: 1386D–1874.
© the author.

10 Ann Christie, "'Nothing of Intrinsic Value': The Scientific Collections at the Bethnal Green Museum," *V&A Online Journal*, no. 3 (spring 2011), http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-03/nothing-of-intrinsic-value-the-scientific-collections-at-the-bethnal-green-museum. See Tim Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project," in *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, ed. Barringer and Tom Flynn (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 28–40. For object information, see https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O849633/design-by-j-w-wild-watercolour-drawing-wild-james-william

11 Christie, "Nothing of Intrinsic Value."

12 Christie, "Nothing of Intrinsic Value"; Timothy Cooper, "Peter Lund Simmonds and the Political Ecology of 'Waste Utilisation' in Victorian Britain," *Technol Cult* 52, no. 1 (Jan. 2011): 21–44. doi:10.1353/tech.2011.0003; Pierre Desrochers, "Promoting Corporate Environmental Sustainability in the Victorian Era: The Bethnal Green Museum Permanent Waste Exhibit (1875–1928)," *V&A Online Journal*, no. 3 (spring 2011), http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-03/promoting-corporate-environmental-sustainability-in-the-victorian-era-the-bethnal-green-museum-permanent-waste-exhibit-1875-1928. Nicole -Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

13 South Kensington Museum, *Catalogue of the Animal Products Collection* (London: Clowes, 1857).

14 Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education. Corresponding publications, however, listed animal products roughly according to biological classes. See P. L. Simmonds, *Animal Products: Their Preparation, Commercial Uses, and Value* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), and Simmonds, *The Commercial Products of the Animal Kingdom Employed in the Arts and Manufactures: Shown in the Collection of the Bethnal Green Branch of the South Kensington Museum* (London: G.E. Eyre & William Spottiswoode, 1880.)

15 Simmonds, *Animal Products,* 1877, xvi.

16 For object information, see https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85499/section-of-shell-used-to-shellronca-james

CRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANIMALS.
SHEWING THEIR UTILITY TO MAN, IN THEIR SERVICES DURING LIFE AND USES AFTER DEATH.
Sperm Whale Fishery.
For Light _ Sperm Oil & Candles.
For Light _ as a Guide to Mariners.
For Food.
Cutting off the Blubber.
Published by THOMAS VARTY, 31, Strand, London.
The Whalebone.
Agriculture _ For Manure.
Manufacture _ Oil Works.
Commerce _ Spermaceti, Ambergris.
Published by THOMAS VARTY, 31, Strand, London.
Designed & Drawn on Stone by W. Hawkins.
THE WHALE.
E.301-1901.

Figure 3
Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins, *Graphic Illustrations of Animals (The Whale)*, one of a series published by Thomas Varty, 31 Strand, London. Coloured lithograph print on paper, backed with woven material. Mid-nineteenth century. Victoria and Albert Museum. V&A: E.301–1901.

Figure 4
Various items of shell jewellery including brooch with two flies, three pairs of earrings, a moth or butterfly hairpin and a necklace, Britain and Tasmania, ca. 1875–1888. Victoria and Albert Museum. V&A: AP.114:2–1875, AP.137–1875, AP.21:1–1888, AP.10:1–1888.

Figure 5
Pair of earrings made from the heads of male red-legged honeycreepers (Cyanerpes cyaneus), taxidermied heads of honeycreepers, gilt copper alloy, glass. England, ca. 1875. Victoria and Albert Museum. V&A: AP.258–1875.

Literary and cultural studies scholar Nicole Shukin writes: "In the discourse of industrial ecology pioneered by Simmonds, a capitalist economy began to approach the totality of a natural ecosystem through the material mimicry of Nature promised by industrial rendering."[17] This teleological sequence of art and industry is expertly illustrated in natural history artist Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins's print series *Graphic Illustrations of Animals* (ca. 1850) (Fig. 3).[18] The subtitle of the twenty-one lithographs featuring animals ranging from whales to silkworms explicates their purpose of "Shewing Their Utility to Man, in Their Services During Life and Uses After Death". Hawkins's prints epitomise the industrial mimicry of evolution that Shukin identifies in Simmonds's collection. However, the role of ornament within this entanglement of industry and ecology remains unexamined.

Ornamental Evolution

Ironically, the aspects of the Bethnal Green collections that have been overlooked in the history of the museum are the very ones that remain intact since the Animal Products Collection was disbanded in 1928, by which time many items were deteriorating. What remains in the V&A today are largely the collection's so-called decorative items, ranging from contemporary European jewellery, accessories and textiles made with bird plumage, shells, bone, horn, beetle wings, fish scales and silk to objects crafted out of animal materials from cultures around the world (Fig. 4).[19] The fad for beetle jewels and feathered fashions among women in late-nineteenth-century Europe and North America corresponded to popular natural

17 Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 71.

18 For object information, see https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O886185/graphic-illustrations-of-animalsprint-hawkins-benjamin-waterhouse/graphic-illustrations-of-animals-print-thomas-varty/

19 For object information, see https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1125267/brooch/

Figure 6
Dress of cotton muslin, gilded metal thread and Indian jewel beetles (sternocera aeqisignata), Britain, 1868–9.
Victoria and Albert Museum.
V&A: T.1698:1 to 5–2017.

history (Fig. 5).[20] Meanwhile, several scholars have examined the ethical and ecological repercussions of the "plume boom" or "murderous millinery" that saw the slaughter of millions of birds worldwide, as well as the conservationist efforts mobilised in response.[21]

That the ornamental aspect of Simmonds's collection has been ignored reflects ornament's historical denigration within evolutionary theory and design history alike. Loos begins "Ornament and Crime" by proclaiming "In the womb, the human embryo passes through the entire phase of evolution corresponding to the evolution of the animal kingdom,"[22] in a direct tribute to the nineteenth-century biologist Ernst Haeckel's recapitulation theory and its erroneous assertion that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny".[23] Loos goes on to compare the (tacitly white male Western European) child's development with the various stages of "the history of mankind", from Papuans to Teutons, Socrates to Voltaire.[24] This cultural trajectory reiterates social evolutionist analogies, such as the parallels Herbert Spencer located between different human groups and zoological classifications, from the "lowest races" and the protozoa (single-celled creatures) upwards in an "advance from the simple to the complex".[25] For Loos, the "urge to ornament" in the context of modern society is degenerate and criminal, and, therefore, he writes, "*the evolution of culture comes to the same thing as the removal of ornament from functional objects*."[26] Loos's evolutionary formulation echoes nineteenth-century aesthetic theorists such as Gottfried Semper and Aloïs Riegl,[27] but also the criminal physiognomist Cesare Lombroso[28] and Charles Darwin himself, who, in *The Descent of Man* (1871), wrote of "savages" that their "passion for ornament is notorious".[29]

20 Michelle Tolini, "'Beetle Abominations' and Birds on Bonnets: Zoological Fantasy in Late-Nineteenth-Century Dress," *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide* 1, no. 1 (spring 2002), https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring02/qbeetle-abominationsq-and-birds-on-bonnets-zoological-fantasy-in-late-nineteenth-century-dress; Jane Munro, "More Like a Work of Art," in *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts*, ed. Diana Donald and Jane Munro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 266. For object information, see https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1126619/earring-unknown/

21 Merle Patchett, "Murderous Millinery," *Fashioning Feathers: Dead Birds, Millinery Crafts and the Plumage Trade*, online exhibition. https://fashioningfeathers.info/murderous-millinery/; Diana Donald, *Women Against Cruelty: Protection of Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Helen Cowie, *Victims of Fashion: Animal Commodities in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

22 Loos, "Ornament and Crime," 187.

23 Ernst Haeckel, *The Natural History of Creation: Or the Development of the Earth and Its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes*, vol. 1, trans. E. Ray Lankester (London: Henry S. King), 309–10.

24 Loos, "Ornament and Crime," 187

25 Herbert Spencer, "Progress: Its Law and Cause" (1857), in *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1868), 16–20.

26 Loos, "Ornament and Crime," 200. Emphasis is from the original text.

27 See Sonja Hildebrand, "Concepts of Creation: Historiography and Design in Gottfried Semper," *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 11 (Dec. 2014), 1-13, and Lamprakos, Michele, "Riegl's 'Modern Cult of Monuments' and The Problem of Value," *Change Over Time* 4, no. 2 (2014): 418–435.

28 See Jimena Canales and Andrew Herscher, "Criminal Skins: Tattoos and Modern Architecture in the Work of Adolf Loos," *Architectural History*, no. 48 (2005): 235–256.

29 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) (London: Penguin, 2004), 367.

In *The Descent*, Darwin also attributed this "passion" to contemporary European women, directly likening modern feminine fashions to the evolution of bird plumage:

> When we behold a male bird elaborately displaying his graceful plumes or splendid colours before the female [...] it is impossible to doubt that she admires the beauty of her male partner. As women everywhere deck themselves with these plumes, the beauty of such ornaments cannot be disputed.[30]

Darwin addressed this neat, if cross-gendered, symmetry between human self-fashioning and avian evolution with his theory of sexual selection. His thinking emerged out of his own lingering dissatisfaction with the theory of natural selection put forth in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and its inadequacy for explaining the development of traits that were superfluous to function or survival, such as conspicuous colouration and unwieldy tailfeathers. Darwin's hypothesis that such traits evolved through mate choice was widely rejected even by his supporters, including his co-theorist of natural selection A.R. Wallace, partly because it granted the capacity for taste to animals and in particular sexual agency to *female* animals.[31] Consequently, sexual selection was variously ignored or subsumed as a variation of natural selection throughout the twentieth century.

30 Darwin, *Descent*, 115.

31 Munro, "More Like a Work of Art," 276.

Animal Aesthetics on Display

Recently, several scholars have endeavoured to revive Darwin's theory of sexual selection as a standalone evolutionary process distinct from natural selection. The ornithologist Richard Prum calls sexual selection a process of "aesthetic evolution" in which "desire and the object of desire coevolve", so that not only does desire shape beauty, but beauty shapes desire.[32] Hence, the philosopher and musician David Rothenberg locates "the origins of art" in the evolution of bird plumage, song and display, bolstering Darwin's argument that "some animals possess emotions of the beautiful"[33] and defying the anthropocentrism that has overshadowed this conclusion.

However, such claims fail to overcome the problematic subjectivity of beauty and leave other evolutionary problems unresolved. Wallace did not only reject Darwin's theory of sexual selection because it "violated Wallace's spiritual theory of human exceptionalism"[34] but also due to lingering questions regarding the evolution of what humans may consider beautiful in less readily anthropomorphic creatures.[35] Although scholars have focused on the significant cultural overlap between bird and human ornament, other animal materials in the Bethnal Green Museum's collections complicate such species-jumping aesthetics in both Darwin and contemporary scholarship. For example, although iridescence appears to play an important role in sexual selection in some animals, it is also

32 Richard O. Prum, *The Evolution of Beauty* (New York: Anchor, 2017), 8.

33 Quoted in David Rothenberg, *Survival of the Beautiful: Art, Science and Evolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 2.

34 Prum, *The Evolution*, 32.

35 A.R. Wallace, "The Colours of Animals: Their Meaning and Use Especially Considered in the Case of Insects" (review of the book by Edward Bagnall Poulton), *Nature* (24 July 1890): 291.

thought to aid other forms of intra-species communication, as well as deter predators, strengthen structure, repel water or enhance vision.[36] In molluscs, such shimmery colouration is invisible due to its location inside the shell and the animals' poor vision or lack of eyes altogether, and may be incidental to the way nacre is formed in the shell.[37] Iridescent beetles meanwhile may blend into their leafy backgrounds by appearing like droplets of water or hinder their predators' ability to strike through a distraction or "flash mechanism".[38] The subterfuge is thwarted when gilded in earrings or sewn into textiles like sequins (Fig. 6).[39]

The problem of hypothetical inter-species conceptions of beauty is paralleled by the variety of cultural functions of the objects in the collections. For example, the Tasmanian shell necklaces on display alongside European jewellery are heritage icons that mark an unbroken Aboriginal tradition dating back at least two thousand years and were used as adornment, gifts and tokens of honour and objects of trade (see Figure 4). This runs counter to Simmonds, who proclaimed, "the last of the aboriginal Tasmanians has passed away, and no more shell necklets thus prepared can be obtained of them",[40] rationalising the Museum's purpose of preservation in the face of both species and cultural extinction. Meanwhile, European women's adornment with feathers, insects and shells bore cultural meaning beyond attracting a mate, communicating an interest in contemporary natural history and a desire for interspecies communion, however heinous the means. While Loos and others following in Darwin's wake have argued that "all art is erotic",[41] rather than defy sexual selection and its implications for interspecies histories of art, the qualities of such human objects and animal materials may instead open up such theories beyond gendered, ethnocentric and anthropocentric understandings of sex and beauty.

Conclusion

There is a poetic beauty, and even a wicked irony, in the fate that befell the collections of animal and waste products, which were largely deaccessioned and destroyed due to their own degradation by nonhuman interlocuters – living organisms (pests and bacteria) mounted a multi-species takeover. Yet, an additional irony exists in the longevity of the ornamental, in the museum and throughout deep time, given the perceived obsolescence of the collections and of ornament itself. This persistence at once problematises the category of "ornament" whilst putting pressure on the Victorian animal product paradigm and its legacies. As such, it complicates the dualism between decorative and functional, sustained since Darwin, in both evolution and design.

36 Stéphanie M. Doucet and Melissa G. Meadows, "Iridescence: A Functional Perspective," *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* 6, suppl. 2 (6 Apr. 2009): 115–32. doi: 10.1098/rsif.2008.0395.focus, 115.

37 Paul Wood (Professor of Ecohydrology and Physical Geography, Loughborough University), personal correspondence, 27 Feb. 2023.

38 Doucet and Meadows, "Iridescence", 124.

39 For object information, see https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1387342/dress/

40 P. L. Simmonds, *The Commercial Products of the Sea: Marine Contributions to Food, Industry, and Art* (London: Griffith and Farran, 1879), 295.

41 Loos, "Ornament and Crime," 188.

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Bio

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Made to Impress:

The Cloisonné *Duomuhu* of the Qianlong Reign in the National Palace Museum Collection

Chih-I Lai

Abstract

This paper explores the motivations and significance behind the creation of cloisonné *duomuhu* (milk tea ewers) during Emperor Qianlong's reign, focusing on the collection at the National Palace Museum. By uncovering the intentions and craftsmanship involved, it aims to shed light on the creative processes and cultural influences that shaped these exquisite artifacts. Cloisonné *duomuhu* exemplify a fusion of diverse artistic traditions, blending elements from nomadic Manchu and Mongolian cultures, Tibetan Buddhist ornamentation, traditional Chinese aesthetics, and Western decorative influences imported by missionaries and foreign traders. Drawing on archival records, Emperor Qianlong's patronage of cloisonné *duomuhu* is examined, providing insights into the aesthetic preferences and cultural aspirations of the Qing Empire. Notably, these resplendent ewers were specifically reserved for grand banquets, including the prestigious state banquet held at the Chengde Mountain Resort in the 45th year of Emperor Qianlong's reign, where they were used to serve milk tea.

Through analysis of the design elements and an examination of their placement on Qing emperors' banquet tables, the nuanced social and political functions associated with these ewers is explored, arguing that the cloisonné *duomuhu* were purposefully created to assert and exemplify the authority and consummate artistry of the Qing Empire, symbolizing opulence and omnipotence within the imperial court. By unraveling the imperial grandeur encapsulated within these objects, this study contributes to our understanding of their inherent significance and enriches our appreciation of the artistic legacy and visual splendor of the Qianlong reign of the Qing Empire. It also invites critical reflections on the role of ornamentation in design, prompting further exploration of the cultural impact of such intricate artifacts.

Displaying Power at Qianlong's Royal Banquet Tables

Royal banquets and royal family gatherings are more than just a simple meal. The arrangement of table settings and utensils in palace banquets follows certain rules and considerations, taking into account not only their functionality and aesthetics but also their style, cultural significance, and symbolism. In the chapter "Ceremonial Usages (Li Yun)" in *The Book of Rites* (禮記*Li ji)*, it states: "At the first use of ceremonies, they began with meat and drink."[1] From ancient times to the present day, the arrangement and organization of feasts and banquets has served not only to satisfy hunger and provide nourishment but also to highlight certain social and cultural distinctions, such as local customs, seasonal influences, and the differences between social classes through the selection of dishes and table displays.

For grand banquets, there was sometimes inevitably a need to allocate and transfer ornate banquet utensils due to insufficient quantities for large amounts of guests. According to the records in the *Archives of The Imperial Workshops*, in the 45th year of Emperor Qianlong's reign (1780) preparations were made for the extravagant celebration of the Emperor's 70th birthday in Rehe where the Chengde Mountain Resort (also called the Summer Palace) was located. The Emperor issued a decree to transfer the utensils used for major banquets in the Forbidden City in Beijing to Chengde for supplementary use and replenishment purposes.[2]

In the 46th year of Emperor Qianlong's reign (1781), a similar situation occurred for the grand banquet at the Ning Shou Palace. Preemptively, an edict was issued to craftsmen at the enamel workshop for the prompt creation of new utensils. Additionally, duplicate sets of utensils used in the grand banquets were ordered and sent to Shengjing, now Shenyang, for official use. Throughout the archival documents, the process of customizing these "grand banquet utensils" reveals that they included cloisonné enamel banquet drinking and dining vessels, such as plates, bowls, cups, and saucers, as well as a pair of vases, a large jar, a pair of *duomuhu* (milk tea ewers), a pair of wine vessels, a basin, a horse-headed spoon, and a golden-based enamel goblet. These utensils blended various Manchu, Mongolian, Han Chinese, and European forms and decorations to create a distinctive and unique display on the grand banquet tables in the Qing court.

An indispensable ritual during Qing court banquets was the "milk tea ceremony." As many members of the Qing imperial family were from the Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan nobility, they preserved their heritage of drinking milk tea even after establishing the Qing dynasty. Various tea preparation rooms were established in the imperial palaces where different types of tea and snacks were prepared according to the needs of each palace, the occasion and the season. Notably, milk tea served not only as a daily beverage in the Qing court but also played a significant role in various banquets and ceremonies.

The Exclusive Milk Tea Wares of the Qing Royal Palace

From the *Three Records of Longjiang* (龍江三記 *Longjiang san ji*), relevant accounts observe that in general Manchu banquets, the custom would be for the host to offer tobacco before serving the milk tea. Besides being served at banquets and for daily consumption, milk tea was used on various occasions within the palace: it was offered during altar and temple ceremonies, tomb visits, and as an offering during Shamanistic rituals and lama chanting in the Central Hall. Milk tea was also used in mourning rituals for empresses,

1 "Sacred Books of the East, volume 28, part 4: *The Li Ji*," trans. James Legge (Oxford University Press, 1885), Chinese Text Project: http://ctext.org/liji

2 Guanzhen Digital Archive, *Archives of Ceramics In The Court of Qing Dynasty*, vol. XVI (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1976), 20.

consorts, and concubines, where it was served three times a day. Thus, the consumption of milk tea during important banquet occasions became a common and significant form of social interaction among the Manchu people, regardless of social status. During weddings, funerals, festivals, and religious activities, there was a demand for milk tea as an offering, reward, and as alms. Within the organizational structure of the Qing court, there were even eleven Mongolian individuals specifically appointed to reside in the Guanglu Temple, where they were responsible for preparing tea, primarily milk tea for imperial banquets.

Whether it was New Year banquets within the palace or feasts for Mongolian nobles, Tibetan high monks, or envoys from vassal states, the custom of drinking the imperial gift of milk tea was observed.[3] This ritual is poetically described by Emperor Qianlong in his poem *Bestowing a Banquet upon the Mongolian Princes*:

> **On an auspicious day, your presence graces the shining golden dunes,**
>
> **With towering yellow tents, the banquet welcomes honored guests.**
>
> **Purple sea shells filled with grape wine, jade bowls brimming with milk tea,**
>
> **Mocking the Southern Court's lavish gifts, a mere audience with China they seek. Extending our ancestral heritage, we hope for unity and prosperity,**
>
> **Within our realm, domestic and foreign rulers are like one family.**[4]

One can envision the scene of milk tea being served in jade bowls to Mongolian nobles during banquets, as Emperor Qianlong notes in a poem called "Ode to the Hetian White Jade Bowl": "The milk tea simmers with cow's milk, the jade bowl is as white and pure as sheep's fat. In the imperial palace, the grandeur of the ceremony is praised, and the grace of tea is bestowed."[5] This poem is contained in an anthology with helpful annotations: "Serving milk tea is a national ceremony, while tea is bestowed in the imperial palace, symbolizing benevolence and connection." Therefore, within the Qing palace, not only was milk tea consumed as a customary beverage, it also served as a medium to strengthen relationships with the Mongolian and Tibetan nobility. Compared to the "Three Clear Teas (三清茶)" mainly shared with the Han literati, the rich and creamy milk tea invoked memories and emotions of the imperial family's shared grassland lifestyle with the kings and nobles of the frontier regions. At such occasions, drinking milk tea during grand banquets was not merely a physical pleasure but a significant ritual that created a sense of unity between the imperial authority and foreign dignitaries, emphasizing the majesty of the Qing court.

The Making of *Duomuhu*

According to the royal archive documents, Emperor Qianlong commissioned the Enamel Workshop of the Imperial Household Department to make several cloisonné *duomuhu* during the early part of his reign, some of the most lavish of which are decorated with gem stones and gold bases, such as those commissioned for the state banquet at the Chengde Mountain Resort in the 45th year of his reign. From the Qing Palace archives, including the *Summer Palace (Bishu Shanzhuang) Archives* from May of the 45th year of Emperor Qianlong's reign

3 *Guochao Gongshi* (History of the Imperial Court), vols. 6–7, 18–23, in *Siku Quanshu* (Complete Library in Four Sections), 121–131. https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=53102&page=122, accessed under the "Chinese Text Project." Originally compiled in the 7th year of Qianlong's reign and revised in the 24th year.

4 (Qing) Gaozong, "Banquet for Mongolian Princes," in *Imperial Poems, Volume II*, in *Complete Collection of Imperial Poems and Writings of Qing Gaozong,* vol. 4, scroll 51, (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1976) 16.

5 (Qing) Gaozong, "Ode to the Hetian White Jade Bowl," in *Imperial Poems, Volume V*, 8.

Figure 1
Cloisonné lidded jar with painted enamel designs.
Qing dynasty (Qianlong reign).
National Palace Museum Collection.

Figure 2
Cloisonné *duomuhu* with painted enamel designs.
Qing dynasty (Qianlong reign).
National Palace Museum Collection.

(1780) and the *Archives of The Imperial Workshops* of the Qing Palace Administration, a significant document related to the collection of cloisonné milk tea wares was discovered. It records the preparation for the grand celebration of the Emperor's 70th birthday at the Chengde Mountain Resort. Specially commissioned were a set of exquisite coral-topped gold-based Western-style cloisonné ewers (each ewer adorned with 120 pieces of coral, 40 pieces of lapis lazuli, and 72 pieces of peacock stone) and two coral-topped gold-based Western-style cloisonné *duomuhu* (each mounted on a gilt copper base, embellished with 35 pieces of coral, 15 pieces of turquoise, 3 pieces of lapis lazuli, and 17 pieces of peacock stone).[6] The use of luxurious materials and intricate craftsmanship highlighted the ceremonial significance of these items.

Comparing the extant artifacts, they bear a resemblance to the Palace collection's imperial Qianlong cloisonné lidded jar with painted enamel designs (Fig. 1) and the imperial Qianlong cloisonné *duomuhu* with painted enamel designs (Fig. 2). This round-shaped metal-based cloisonné jar features a tower-like lid with inlaid precious stones in relief. Both this cloisonné jar and the *duomuhu* from the same design series have a coral top, with coral, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and peacock stone inlays decorating the hoop, the edges of the lid, and the base in a dynamic and artistic manner. The use of inlaid semi-precious stones on a metal base is commonly found in Tibetan artifacts. The entire vessel is adorned with intricate cloisonné intertwining lotus patterns and employs Western-style enamel painting techniques showing delicate polychrome paintings of ladies, a mother and child, flowers, butterflies, and landscapes. It blends Chinese, Tibetan, and Western stylistic elements, showcasing the unique aesthetic of eclecticism in Qianlong courtly craftsmanship.

The pairing of cloisonné *duomuhu* and large jars is frequently mentioned in the records of the Qing Palace accounts office, indicating their interlinked usage. The earliest documentation of the existence of such a pairing as a set dates from the fifth year of the Qianlong period (1740), as recorded by the eunuch Gao Yu of Laiyue:

> **Sample drafts of one gold ewer and two gold cloisonné *duomuhu*. The order has been given to follow this style, either in cloisonné enamel with green and blue enamel, or in Western-style painted enamel. First, submit the design for review and then proceed with the production in a timely manner. Approved by the Emperor.**[7]

From this, we can observe that in the Qing Palace archives, the arrangement of a single large jar with a pair of cloisonné *duomuhu* was quite common in banquets. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that there was always more than one *duomuhu*, while only a single jar was used. Additionally, the creation of the gold and silver-wrapped gilt cloisonné *duomuhu* should be attributed to the innovative design and modifications initiated by the Imperial Workshops under Emperor Qianlong's instructions. As these styles differed from previous ones, they required the submission of designs for review to confirm dimensions, shapes, and details before production. Moreover, the experimentation with Western-style cloisonné enamel was a novel attempt to develop the initial design of this particular style. Gradually, this combination of one large jar and two *duomuhu* ewers became the standardized arrangement during the early years of Emperor Qianlong's reign. Subsequently, various diverse variations and decorative patterns were developed for these sets. For the significant banquet ceremonies held in the Qing Palace, Emperor Qianlong frequently tasked the Imperial Workshops to expedite the production of different styles of ceremonial dining utensils. Some of these cloisonné *duomuhu* sets were replicated from existing forms, while others were a combination of elements from different objects

6 Guanzhen Digital Archive, *Archives of Ceramics*, 20.

7 "Gold Plating Workshop," in *Complete Collection of Archives from the Qing Palace Internal Affairs Office*, vol. 9 (October 28, 1740), 493–495.

Figure 3
Mongolian *dongbu* pot. Qing dynasty. Inner Mongolia Museum Collection.

to create new designs. The creation and usage of these cloisonné *duomuhu* sets were not only limited to practical purposes but also held symbolic significance in expressing cultural connections and imperial power. As the years passed, the techniques and aesthetics of these sets continued to evolve, reflecting the dynamic cultural exchange and artistic innovations within the Qing Dynasty.

In conclusion, the examination of the Qing Palace archives reveals that the cloisonné *duomuhu* sets were a significant aspect of banquet ceremonies during Emperor Qianlong's reign. These sets, composed of one large jar and two *duomuhu* ewers, were meticulously designed and produced by the Imperial Workshops, displaying a blend of traditional Chinese and innovative Western enamel techniques. The use of these exquisite sets showcased the emperor's authority and demonstrated cultural diplomacy, reflecting the intricate intersection of cultural elements within the Qing Dynasty.

While these milk tea ewers are often seen as mere successors to Tibetan and Mongolian ewer designs, this paper contends that they should be viewed as a unique category of objects deliberately crafted and adorned to showcase the authority and superior craftsmanship of the Qing Empire. The shape of these exquisite cloisonné *duomuhu* vessels draws inspiration from various sources, including the monk's cap ewer, the Mongolian *dongbuhu* pot, and the Tibetan tea churn, known as *mdong-mo*, which is represented by a wooden tube with brass bands. In Tibet, tea is usually prepared by boiling a Chinese tea brick in a cooking pot with a pinch of baking soda. After boiling for a few minutes, the liquid is transferred into a mixing churn, where butter and salt are added. The entire mixture is vigorously churned using a long plunger until it becomes emulsified. Only then is the tea poured into a teapot for serving.

Although the Qing dynasty cloisonné *duomuhu* adopted the form and decoration of a Tibetan tea churn, these *duomuhu* ewers made by the court artisans are only for serving tea and cannot be used for churning. This was a new design combining the cloisonné technique which reached China during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) from Byzantium via the Islamic world and the European painted enamel techniques to create a new hybrid design featuring characteristics of Mongolian and Tibetan ornamentation. By analyzing the design elements on these cloisonné *duomuhu* used on Emperor Qianlong's banquet table, the social and political functions performed by these flamboyant ewers can be observed.

Visual Evidence of the Qing Palace's Use of *Duomuhu*

The rituals and utensils used for drinking milk tea during the Qing Dynasty are not only documented

Figure 4
An illustration from the *Manchuria Chronicles* （滿洲實錄）of the use of *duomuhu* at a Qing emperor's banquet.

in written records but also illustrated in printed books and paintings. For instance, in volume three of the official Qing Dynasty history book, *Manchuria Chronicles* (滿洲實錄), there is an illustration titled *Emperor Nurhaci Receiving the Nine Roads* (Fig. 3). This depiction shows a *duomuhu* featuring a pouring spout and handles accompanied by tea bowls and other tea utensils set on a table in front of the seat of Emperor Nurhaci (1559–1626). The contours of the cap of the *duomuhu* in the image, which stands up at the back, are similar to the blue and white glazed *duomuhu* from the Yuan dynasty in the Capital Museum Collection, Beijing (Fig. 4). It imitates the original style of leather or metal *dongbuhu* pot with hoop straps, following the shape of a lama's hat, rising from the mouth of the pot to the handle. This design differs from the majority of Qing dynasty *duomuhu*, like the *dongbuhu* pot in Figure 5 which has a higher front and lower back.

However, this low-front, high-back shape of the top of the *doumuhu* can be found in traditional Tibetan artifacts, such as the Ming dynasty (Xuande reign) cloisonné lotus-patterned lama hat pot in the Tibet Museum Collection, the dragon-handled lama hat pot[8] in the Potala Palace Treasure Gallery, and the Ming dynasty (Xuande reign) blue and white lama hat pot with Tibetan characters and twin dragon patterns in the National Palace Museum collection (Fig. 6). The top rim of these pots share the same low-front, high-back shape.

The primary form structure of Qing dynasty *doumuhu* exhibits a distinct design when compared to its predecessor, the *dongbuhu* pot or lama hat pot. While it draws inspiration from the shape of the Tibetan wooden churn and incorporates the external hoops reminiscent of the churn tube, it omits the central churning sticks that facilitate the whisking of butter milk tea. Remarkably, one of the ceramic *doumuhu* pieces within the collection of the National Palace Museum even replicates the timber texture of the wooden butter milk tea churn through glazing, showcasing exceptional ceramic craftsmanship that can convincingly deceive the observer's eye. Beyond the inherent form that carries the legacy of Tibetan and Mongolian traditions, the embellishment of these opulent cloisonné *doumuhu* exemplifies a fusion of aesthetics and techniques derived from Tibetan Buddhism. The gilt hoops and gem-encrusted tops resonate with motifs frequently found in Tibetan Buddhist artifacts used by the Qing court.

During the Ming dynasty, as part of its appeasement policy towards the Tibetan people, the court rewarded tribute bearers with a large number of goods and exquisite porcelain, which are still well preserved today. However, among the existing artifacts, besides the lama hat pot, there is no definitive evidence to suggest that *duomuhu* were produced during the Ming dynasty. However,

8 Potala Palace Administration, ed., *Illustrated Catalogue of the Potala Palace Treasure Gallery,* (China Tibetology Publishing House, 2007): 265–267.

Figure 5
White glazed *duomuhu*. Yuan Dynasty.
Capital Museum Collection, Beijing.

Figure 6
Blue and white lama hat pot with Tibetan characters and twin dragon patterns. Ming dynasty (Xuande reign). National Palace Museum Collection.

based on existing artifacts, there is evidence to support the view that various types of *duomuhu* were produced during the Qianlong reign of the Qing dynasty using different materials, techniques, and decorations as diplomatic gifts to establish alliances with Mongolia and Tibet.[9]

Conclusion

The *duomuhu* was not originally part of Tibetan or Mongolian traditions but an innovative creation that combined traditional Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan drinking vessels with Western enamel techniques. This fusion resulted in a new type of tea utensil that was primarily decorative rather than functional. Its design symbolizes the fusion of Tibetan and Mongolian culture with Western technologies in the aim of promoting cultural harmony and stronger relations.

During the Qing dynasty, cloisonné enamelware, once considered unsuitable for refined occasions during the Ming period, gained prominence. The Qing court, recognizing the cultural significance of milk tea, began using cloisonné enamel to create elaborate tableware for state banquets. This marked a shift away from Ming dynasty prejudices, showcasing the Qing dynasty's ability to integrate diverse cultural and technological influences.

The deliberate use of these ornate utensils in the presence of foreign dignitaries highlighted the Qing court's ceremonial authority and respect. Emperor Qianlong esteemed this cloisonné enamelware, considering it "exquisitely superior to antiquity," and used it to foster diplomatic ties with Mongolia and Tibet. The meticulously crafted *duomuhu* symbolized the Qing court's mastery of cross-cultural and technological integration, making them the centerpiece of state banquets.

9 Chen Lianyong, "A Brief Study on the Origin and Development of the Duomu Teapot," *The Collector*, no. 3 (2007): 43.

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The Wild & Wessel Lamp Factory in Berlin (1855–1903) and the Development of Ornament

António Cota

Abstract

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, mainly in France, new lamps were developed and perfected whose luminosity was superior to traditional lighting sources. Their use rapidly spread and helped to improve daily life in the mid-nineteenth century. During this period, the city of Paris became the world's largest lamp producer, with myriad factories employing artists to design their pieces, such as Noël Bosselut, which became one of the most prestigious lamp companies in France.

It was there that the Prussians Heinrich Otto Emil Wild (1826–96) and Friedrich Wilhelm Wessel (ca. 1830–98) were employed for some time and learned how to produce moderator lamps and the technology needed to establish a factory. In 1855 they returned to Berlin and founded the Wild & Wessellampen fabrik which quickly became one of the largest lamp factories in Germany. They also employed artists to design their products and cleverly allied *Kunstgewerbe* and *Kunstindustrie* to produce new lamp designs with eclectic ornamentation. This paper shows how Wild & Wessel used ornament to create timeless lamps and dominate the European market.

For collectors of 19th-century Western lighting, zinc oil lamps are immediately associated with Germany. It was in this country that a significant number of lamps in this metal were produced and where they defined an essentially Germanic image. However, their design was based on various iconographic and historicist sources, of German and Italian origin, developed by the most prominent sculptors and architects, in which ornament was fundamental in emphasising the new forms developed. The Wild & Wessel factory in Berlin was instrumental in building this imaginary and was one of the largest of its kind in the world. This study is based on documentary sources and the observation of lamps produced by the factory.

The Industrial Revolution (1760–1840) triggered the development of various types of products in the United Kingdom and France, including oil, gas and electric lamps.[1] Their manufacture particularly flourished in France, where, in 1836, the French engineer Charles-Louis-Félix Franchot (1809–1881) patented the so-called *modérateur* (moderator) lamp,[2] a widely produced oil lamp considered by the Belgian historian Phillipe Deitz as *la reine des lampes du XIXe siècle.*[3]

Paris became the world's largest producer of lighting and stood out for the exemplary quality of the metalwork, ceramics and glass used. Designed in the contemporaty and eclectic style, its lamps reconciled form with function and positioned France as a leader within the sector among industrialised nations.

In fact, the success of industrial manufacturing was masterfully supported by the alliance between art and industry in these new types of household items that proudly demonstrated mass production techniques and technological advances. Shrewdly, the lighting industry offered a broad variety of lamps with specific functions that used different materials to appeal to a wide range of consumers. This democratic approach ensured that everyone could have access to high-quality artificial light in their homes, public spaces and industrial buildings at prices they could afford. It also needed to keep up with the latest trends and took advantage of the dissemination of lithographs and chromolithographs with decorative solutions and equipment designs published by the most renowned artists. Examples of this are the books *Ornements, Décorations intérieures. Meubles et objets de goût composés. Dessinés et gravée par Jacob Petit,* published by French designer and porcelain maker Jacob Petit (1796–1868) in 1831,[4] and *Ornemens Anciens et Modernes*[5] and *L'Industrie Artistique*, *L'Ornemaniste et les arts industriels* and *L'Industrie artistique – Recueil de compositions d'ornements,* published around 1842 and 1858, respectively, by French painter Eugène Julienne (1808–1875).[6]

The main lamp factories in Paris were Carcel, Gagneau, Joseph Schlossmacher, Gotten, Hadrot, Levavasseur Fréres, Neuburger, Lépine & Bourdon and Noël Bosselut. The latter was located at 9 Quai Valmi and was famous for its *lampes riches en bronze, à modérateur en tous genres.*[7] In 1853,

1 The luminosity of these lamps was superior to more traditional artificial light sources.

2 The name comes from the ability to easily moderate the flow of oil to the burner which distinguished it from other lamps at the time. The reservoir is cylindrical and below the tube where the burner sits, creating a greater incidence of light around it. It has a coil spring, a leather piston and a vertical tube with a needle inside. The needle moderates the flow of oil into the burner and through the tube, while the coil spring is regulated by a side key on the burner. It used rapeseed oil and, in southern Europe, olive oil.

3 Philippe Deitz, *Histoire des luminaires*, (Liège: Editions du Perron, 2009), 138.

4 Jacob Petit, *Ornements, Décorations intérieures. Meubles et objets de goût composés. Dessinés et gravée par Jacob Petit* (Paris: Bance aîné, 1831).

5 Eugène Julienne, *Ornemens Anciens et Modernes* (Paris: Letouzé, ca. 1842).

6 Eugène Julienne, *L'Industrie Artistique*, *L'Ornemaniste et les arts industriels* and *L'Industrie artistique – Recueil de compositions d'ornements* (all 3 books published in Paris: Bulla frères et Jouy, 1858).

7 *Annuaire-almanach du commerce de l'industrie de la magistrature et de l'administration, ou, Almanach des 1,500,000 adresses de Paris, des départements, des colonies et des pays étrangers*, (Paris: Firmin-Didot Frères, Fils, et Cie, 1859), 710.

the Prussians Heinrich Otto Emil Wild (1826–1896) and Friedrich Wilhelm Wessel (c. 1830–1898) began working at the factory where they learnt to manufacture moderators before returning to Prussia.

On 1 July 1855, they founded the Wild & Wessel factory at 37 Alexandrinenstrasse in Berlin. In 1858, the factory moved permanently to Prinzessinnenstrasse 26 in the same city, where it became one of the largest lamp factories after the unification of Germany in 1871.[8]

Initial production centred on moderators that were quintessentially French in design, in response to the fashion in vogue at the time. In fact, both industrialists ordered machinery from Paris to obtain the standardised ornamental motifs for the burner galleries and cylindrical lamp bodies, among other components. In their memoirs, published in 1894 under the title *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre in der Lampen Industrie. Ein Rückblick*, they stated that they initially had difficulty finding workers in Berlin that were as skilled as those in Paris and only gradually managed to reach the same standards as their French competitors.[9]

During this period, it was realised that the price of vegetable oils was high and that moderators needed constant maintenance to keep working in perfect condition. Mineral oil lighting was being developed and the refining of petroleum, which has higher viscosity and permeability than vegetable oils and is advantageously cheaper, although its flame is slightly less luminous but more odorous, was perfected in Europe and the USA. Wild & Wessel immediately realised the enormous potential of petroleum and began to develop burners and suitable fonts for this new source of artificial light which, despite creating a little more shadow around the base, had to be closer to the burner for better flame performance. Experiments culminated in 1865 with the Kosmos burner, which, since Prussia had yet to open a patent office, was patented that same year in France and the United Kingdom.[10]

The Kosmos burner was launched in five sizes (6, 8, 10, 12 and 14, from smallest to largest)[11] of varying light intensity and a wick surrounded by conical and concentric tubes.[12] It was an immediate success and quickly exported to various European countries, including France, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Russia and Austria-Hungary.

Fundamental to the company's internationalisation and exports was its participation in world exhibitions. It took part in the 1862 International Exhibition in London,[13] 1867 Paris Exposition, 1873 Vienna World's Fair, 1878 and 1889 Paris Expositions and 1893 Chicago World's Fair,

8 Heinrich Otto Emil Wild and Friedrich Wilhelm Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre in der Lampen Industrie. Ein Rückblick*, (Berlin: G. Schade, 1894), 6–8.

9 Wild and Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre*, 8.

10 Wild and Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre*, 72–73; Heinrich Otto Emil Wild and Friedrich Wilhelm Wessel, "English Patents of Inventions, Specifications: 1865. A.D. 1865, 4th August. N.º 2024. Wild & Wessel's Improvements in Wick Holders or Burners for Lamps," in *English Patents of Inventions*, (London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1866), 1–3.

11 The Kosmos burner later gave rise to the following: the Kosmos Normal (in sizes 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14); the Kosmos (in sizes 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18) and the Kosmos Solar (with a central tube inside the wick tube, in sizes 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18). The factory later patented the following burners: the Kosmos Vulcan (in sizes 14, 16, 18 and 30) in 1881; the Central Vulcan (in sizes 14, 16, 18, 24 and 30) in 1881; the Kronos (in sizes 14, 16 and 20) in 1899; and the Agni (in sizes 14, 16 and 18) in 1901.

12 The Kosmos burner was partly inspired by its moderator counterpart: the same elongated flame in the vertical tubes and a similar chimney design. The fact that the Prussian and British lighting industries created oil burners with fixed measurements made it possible to mass produce compatible chimneys and lampshade supports, which were easily replaceable in the event of breakage or damage and increased consumption exponentially. The French lighting industry did not implement this standardised system and each factory had its own measurements for burners, which meant that the base of the chimney of the moderators was slightly conical in order to fit as many different types as possible. This was one of the circumstances, among others, that led to the more rapid rise of German and British factories over French ones in the fourth quarter of the 19th century.

13 *London Exhibition 1862. Special catalogue of the Zollverein-Department*, (Berlin: Rudolf Ludwig Decker, 1862), 122.

Figure 1
Wild & Wessel petroleum lamps, from left to right: model 811, Kosmos Normal 8''' burner, 31.6 x Ø14.5 cm; model 1155, Kosmos 14''', 36 × 18 × 16 cm; model 1419, Kosmos 8''', 16 x Ø15.4 cm (measurements taken without burners). Manufactured in 1870–1903. Zinc, steel, brass and glass.
Author's collection and photograph.

Figure 2
Wild & Wessel petroleum lamps, from left to right: model 1749, Kosmos Solar 14''' burner, 27.8 × 20 × 16.8 cm; model 1405, Kosmos 14''', 39 × 22 × 16.9 cm; model 1513, Kosmos 14''', 14.5 x Ø24.5 cm (measurements taken without burners). Manufactured in 1870–1903. Zinc, steel, brass and glass.
Author's collection and photograph.

Figure 3
Wild & Wessel petroleum lamps, from left to right: model 1409, Kosmos 10''' burner, 24.5 × 19 × 13 cm; model 1766, Kosmos Solar 14''', 29.3 x Ø20 cm; model 1746, Kosmos Solar 14''', 27.1 × 18.8 × 14.3 cm (measurements taken without burners). Manufactured in 1870–1903. Zinc, brass and glass.
Author's collection and photograph.

Figure 4

Wild & Wessel petroleum lamps, from left to right: model 1921, Kosmos 14''' burner, 25 x Ø15.8 cm; model 1922, Kosmos 14''', 21.3 x Ø18.5 cm; model 1923, Kosmos 14''', 21.5 x Ø15.3 cm (measurements taken without burners). Manufactured in 1880–1903. Zinc, brass and glass. Author's collection and photograph.

where it won an award. The 1867 exposition was vital. The company's display was inaugurated by Emperor Napoleon III of France (1808–1873) and the Prussian Royal Family to the music of Italian composer Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868),[14] demonstrating the high level of support provided by the Prussian authorities to its industry and overseas promotion. In Germany, the company took part in the following fairs: Stettin in 1865, Munich in 1876, Nuremberg in 1879 and 1885, and Berlin in 1879.[15] It also participated in the 1869 International Exhibition of Domestic Economy in Amsterdam and 1872 Moscow Exhibition. In Australia, it took part in the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition, which was held from 1888 to 1889.

Participation in these exhibitions was also crucial for the factory to keep up to date with the latest trends. For example, at the 1867 Universal Exposition, the French bronze manufacturer Henri Houdebine displayed a Greek-style vase[16] which became the source of inspiration for the creation of a bronze petroleum lamp with a glass reservoir for Wild & Wessel by the prominent German sculptor Hugo Zacharias (?–ca. 1890) and for its model 710 lamp. Wild & Wessel followed the same practice

14 Wild and Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre*, 12 and 59–60.

15 At the exhibition they were awarded the Prussian State Silver Medal.

16 *The Illustrated Catalogue of the Universal Exhibition, published with the Art journal*, (London: Virtue & Co., 1868), 174.

WILD & WESSEL IN BERLIN.
1/17 natürlicher Grösse.
Tafel 38.
Petroleum-Lampen auf der Weltausstellung in Melbourne 1888—1889.
(Nach einer damals nachträglich aufgenommenen Photographie.)

Figure 5
Wild & Wessel display stand at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition, 1888–1889 (Wild and Wessel 1894, Tafel 38).

as the Parisian lighting factories, like Joseph Schlossmacher, in hiring artists to design their pieces, gaining a reputation for the high technical and aesthetic quality of its moderators.[17] This recognition by the emerging nineteenth-century lamp factories of the enormous importance of sculptors, architects and modellers to design their articles and mass produce them was already recurrent in eighteenth-century ceramics factories.[18]

Wild & Wessel astutely created a solid team of renowned German artists, some of whom from Berlin's royal academies and museums,[19] with whom it strove to combine *Kunstgewerbe* (the applied arts) with *Kunstindustrie* (art and industry) to create a very distinctive image. In fact, the company was proud of the investment it made in the arts by commissioning designs for its lamps, which, by the end of the 1880s, amounted to 20,000 marks a year. In Berlin, they hired the sculptors Hugo Zacharias, Carl Silbernagel (1837–1889), Albert Wolff (1814–1892), Max Wiese (1846–1925), Otto Lessing (1846–1912), J. Loewel, G. Canisius, Fritz Behrendt (1844–1906), R. Meyerheim and Paul Schley (1854–1942); the architects August Carl Alexander Schütz (1847–1892) and Paul Fingerling; and the modellers W. Quehl, N. Koenig, P. Haenisch, E. Greier e B. Pape.[20] The sculptor Zacharias was co-founder of the Berlin jewellers Sy & Wagner; the sculptor Wolff worked with the Prussian architects Carl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) and Friedrich August Stüler (1800–1865) and made important public statuary; the sculptor Lessing was a disciple of the latter and made sculptures and architectural elements for Berlin's main buildings, such as the Berliner Dom and the Reichstag, thus contributing in the early 20th century to the grandeur of the capital of the German Empire; the sculptor Canisius was specialised in bronze ornaments;[21] the sculptor Behrendt was a teacher at the Königl. Kunstgewerbemuseum;[22] the sculptor Schley was head of the sculpture department at the Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur; and the architect Schütz did architectural and decorative works for the German imperial family and was also a professor at the Königl. Kunstgewerbemuseum, where he lectured on the Renaissance period[23] and was the author of the photographic atlas of Italian Renaissance architecture: *Die Renaissance in Italien*, published between 1878 and 1882 in Hamburg by Strumper.[24]

Wild & Wessel made several visits to the museum collections on Berlin's Museum Island with the sculptor Zacharias and to the collection of the Königliches Kunstgewerbemuseum with the architect Schütz and the sculptors Wiese and Lessing to draw inspiration from old pieces for their new lamp models. However, it was only in specific examples that they managed to achieve a certain stylistic purity.[25] Collaboration with these professionals was crucial for Wild & Wessel to build its own image and distance itself from French taste.

The new petroleum lamps had to have certain requirements for their stability and performance due to the high volatility of the fuel. The base usually had a larger diameter than the main body to camouflage the removable or glass/ceramic font and the junction (between the base and the main

17 *The Illustrated Catalogue of the Universal Exhibition*, 42.

18 Such as Meissen in Germany (the first European factory to produce porcelain, founded in 1710 by Augustus II the Strong (1670–1733), the Elector of Saxony, the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania), Sèvres in France (founded in 1740 in Vincennes before moving to Sèvres in 1756), Wedgwood in Britain (founded in Stoke-on-Trent in 1759 by English potter Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795)) and Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur in Prussia – KPM-Berlin (Royal Porcelain Manufactory, Berlin, founded in 1763 by King Frederick II of Prussia or Frederick the Great (1712–1786)).

19 Wild and Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre*, 29.

20 Wild and Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre*, 31.

21 Carl Friedrich Arnold von Lützow, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, (Leipzig: Ernst Arthur Seemann, 1883), 192.

22 Museum of Decorative Arts in Berlin.

23 "Alexander Schütz," Conrad Wilhelm Hase (1818-1902), June 23, 2024, https://glass-portal.hier-im-netz.de/hs/s-z/schuetz_alexander.htm

24 Alina Payne, "Burckhardt's Eyes: The Photography of Renaissance Architecture between Pedagogy and the Museum," in *Photography and Sculpture: The Art Object in Reproduction*, ed. Sarah Hamill and Megan R. Luke, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2017), 102–103.

25 Wild and Wessel, Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre, 28–29.

body) was usually topped by a section just below the main body to provide scale.[26] Ornaments and fantasy and human figurines were applied to these sections, among other decorative motifs explained below.

Production from the 1870s onwards was characterised by a taste for the Baroque era and quite possibly in honour of the founding of the Kingdom of Prussia in 1701. This intensified after Prussia's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) and the subsequent unification of Germany in 1871, which led to the construction of a quintessentially Germanic image. The materials used were crucial to this new vision, with the factory turning to brass, bronze and zinc. Brass and bronze required a lot of labour and had high production costs. On the other hand, zinc was cheap, easy to shape and the details came out of the mould well defined with the advantage that it could be electroplated. Wild & Wessel used zinc extensively in the production of lamps and it was electroplated with copper, brass or nickel or painted with a greenish paint called *verdigris* to give it a certain antique look. However, the underlying function and the reinterpretation of the eclectic ornaments gave the lamps a certain characteristic modernity.

Lamp no. 811, which simulates the pedestal of a bust in the Greek-Roman style, is a good example of the use of verdigris. On the other hand, model 1155 is a new type of Neo-Baroque-style lamp called a *Vasenform* developed by the factory and skilfully enhanced in the sections by ornaments made up of foliage and volutes to emphasise the two central frames with children and the female busts flanking the main body. In the same style as its predecessor, model 1419 embodies modernity with a base of three protruding curved sections interspersed with foliage and cabochons (Fig. 1), while model 1749 is emphasised by the applications of various ornaments, foliage and fruit (Fig.2).

Figure 6
Wild & Wessel petroleum lamps, from left to right: model 2219, Kosmos Solar 14''' burner, 22.8 x Ø16 cm; model 2301 & 2, Central Vulkan 16''', 48.5 x Ø16.5 cm; model 1999, Agni 14''', 29.3 x Ø16.5 cm (measurements taken without burners). Manufactured in 1885–1903. Zinc, steel, brass, glass and marble.
Author's collection and photograph.

26 At the same time, the manufacture of moderators went into decline and the factory definitively ceased production of them in 1875. Wild and Wessel, *Wild & Wessel Fünfzig Jahre*, 15.

In the same period, the factory favoured a Renaissance-era style, creating elaborate compositions with foliage, volutes and fruit, as can be seen in the model 1513 lamp. The same kind of ornamentation was emphasised by human busts, chimeras, mascarons, lions, beasts and mythical creatures on other lamps, such as models 1405 (Fig. 2) and 1766 (Fig. 3). It also launched eclectic models with references to the Greek-Roman, Mannerist, Baroque and Rococo styles displaying ornate handles and in some cases topped by women, men, masks, angels, rams and mythical creatures, such as models 1405, 1409 and 1746 (Figs. 2 and 3).

The factory exploited the difficult proportional balance between a lamp's base and its main body, exquisitely arranging profuse classicist ornaments interspersed with figurations, such as the lions on model 1921, the fauns on the base and busts of men and women on the main body on model 1922 and the mascarons on model 1923 (Fig. 4). The ornamental figuration on these lamps goes unnoticed during the day, but at night when the lamps are lit it takes on a new life, emerging from obscurity and acquiring a certain seductive mystery in the shadows generated by the flame.

Wild & Wessel took eclecticism to a very original level and managed to create various types of lamps for all classes and prices,[27] as can be seen in the company's display for the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition in Australia in 1888.

At the same time, the Kosmos burner was considered the favourite burner of the lower middle class by the Englishman Charles Marvin in his 1887 book *The Moloch of Paraffin.* The illustration printed in the book is that of a zinc lamp,[28] which shows how its image was perpetuated in the collective imaginary.

From 1890 onwards, production focused on more refined lines and more restrained ornaments, such as the base of the model 2219 and 2301&2 lamps (Fig. 6). Curiously, at the same time, they also created the model 1999 on a maritime theme with a merman and a mermaid interspersed on the body of the lamp with stylised and very modern male faces, while aso featuring Neo-Baroque fruit and foliage similar to the previous examples (Fig. 6).

The attention paid to detail was the key to the public's attraction to this type of lamp, particularly as regards the mathematical balance of ornaments in the various sections as these examples show[29] and the iconographic sources referred to.

27 António Cota Fevereiro, "Technology Meets Art: The Wild & Wessel Lamp Factory in Berlin and the Wedgwood Entrepreneurial Model," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 19, no. 2 (October 2020). doi: 10.29411/ncaw.2020.19.2.2

28 Charles Marvin, *The Moloch of Paraffin*, (London: R. Anderson & Co., 1887), 15–16.

29 As model 811 shows, the base of the pedestal has 2 different ornaments. On model 1155, the base has 4 by 4 ornaments, the junction (between the base and the main body) has 4, the base of the main body has 8 and the lid of the font has 8. On model 1405, the outer edge of the base has 16 ornaments rising to a further 4, the base of the main body 4 and the lid of the font 16. On model 1409, the base has 8, the junction 8 and the lid 8. On model 1419, the base has 3. On model 1513, the base has 24 along its outer edge rising to a further 4, the junction 4, the main body 8 and the lid 16. On model 1746, the base has 8, the junction 8 and the lid 8. On model 1749, the base has 8 along its outer edge rising to a further 4, the junction 6, the base of the main body 12, the main body 6 (separated by the two handles and therefore the lower compositions of 4 and 8) and the lid 6. On model 1766, the base has 3, the junction 3 in 3, the base of the main body 9, the main body 3 in 3 and the lid 6. On model 1921, the base has 6, the base of the main body 12, the main body 6 and the lid 6. On model 1922, the base has 4, the junction 4, the main body 4 and the lid along the outer edge has 16 and inside 8. On model 1923, the base has 3, the junction 3, the base of the main body 9, the main body 9 and the lid 9. On model 2219, the base has 6, the junction 12 and between the junction and the glass font 9. On model 1999, the base has 4, the junction 8, the base of the main body 16, the top of the main body 24 and the lid 4. On model 2301&2, the base of the column is 2 by 2. Most of the ornaments, made up of four patterned motifs, consisted of two or four scenes on the main body, as we can see in these lamps.

Although the author has undertaken pioneering research on Wild & Wessel's artistic production, [30] the ornaments used in the lamps had never been looked at in detail, hence the motivation for this study. The technological development of the burners and metals used by the factory was important for commercial success, but this was wisely complemented by careful artistic production ensured by the finest artisans available in Berlin. The surface of the new designs was covered with ornaments inspired by Greek--Roman, Renaissance, Mannerist, Baroque and Rococo styles, eclectically reinterpreted on the lamps in a balanced and mathematical way, thus contributing to a Germanic image. As these references were common across Europe, they were decisive in the company's commercial success.

Although Wild & Wessel reached its peak in 1900, it was eventually sold in 1903 to its competitor Hugo Schneider in Leipzig.[31] Despite being considered for many decades as kitsch, the company's artistic production represents a milestone in the history of design, which it is hoped this study helps to make clear.

30 Cota Fevereiro, "Technology Meets Art".

31 Burner production was moved to Leipzig and ceased definitively in the 1920s.

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Bio

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Grotesques, Chimeras and Griffins:

Ornaments to Protect Entrance Gates and Treasures

Martina Pall

Abstract

Grotesques, chimeras, and griffins as recurring ornaments on objects of applied art are a frequently recognizable detail. They lurk at entrance gates, guarding them or protecting the treasures stored inside. They are mixed creatures, mostly animal and human, with overly long noses or extremities that can end in tendrils. Grotesques have been found on wall paintings since antiquity, for example in Pompeii. The best known are certainly Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican, which later appeared as popular ornaments on objects of applied art. Grotesque art was used to decorate ceilings and walls. It is a "weightless world" of suspended gravity in which the beings live alongside craters, garlands, plants, and tendrils. The so-called tail grotesques, which appear around 1580–1600, are regarded as a further development, in which tendrils and hanging motifs are also mixed in with the grotesques. Chimeras are terrifying fire-breathing monsters consisting of body parts from eagles, lions, goats, and snakes, and are usually portrayed as hissing with evil. The exact distinction or division between griffin and chimera is not always clear. It is necessary to look at the abdomen, legs and face (human or animal) and whether the torso is drawn in to distinguish between them. Does the animal have wings or a tail? Especially in applied art, the mixing of these two mythical creatures is commonplace. Griffins are mostly depicted in their function as guards. Their penetrating gaze represents strength and vigilance.

This paper will look at examples of ornaments based on regular models, primarily grotesques, chimeras, and griffins. These have been used for centuries and are primarily found on doors, gates and many other objects of decorative art, and vary in meaning.

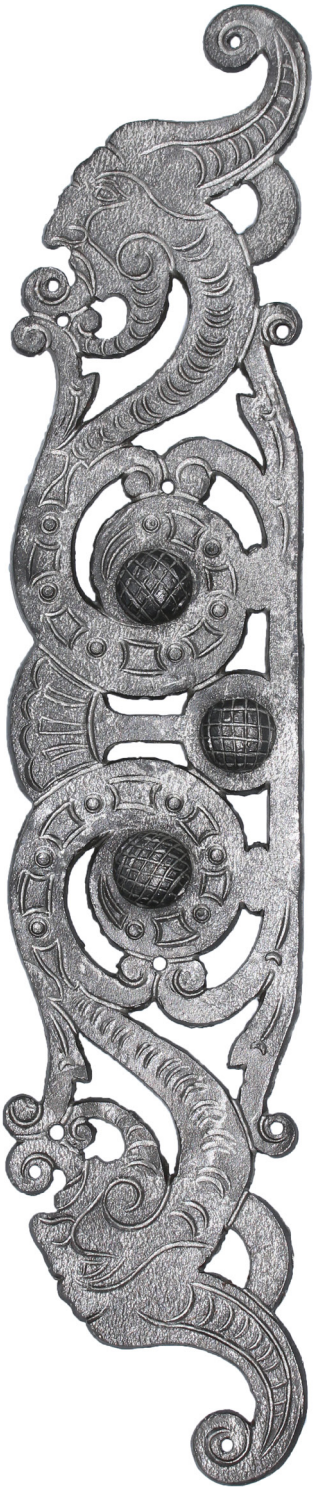

Figure 1
Keyplate, iron, 17th century.
Schell Collection. Inv. no. 2345.

Figure 2
Mount, iron, 17th century.
Schell Collection. Inv. no. 1234.

Figure 3
Key, iron, French, 17th century.
Schell Collection. Inv. no. 6250.

Mythical animals protecting entrance gates and treasures have great fascination – no one knows where they come from, they have rarely been seen, and yet everyone knows about their existence. They are intangible and yet exist in a world that stands between reality and fiction.

Because they are not real, mythical animals are particularly suitable for depicting emotions and fears. Like the colors white and black represent good and evil in our minds, mythical animals are divided into good and evil. In ancient times and the Middle Ages, the term "fabula" referred to a made-up story. The invented and the real were mixed, and it was only with the Enlightenment and the classification into empirical laws that the understanding of mythical creatures changed. Mythical creatures exist in all parts of the world and all continents, in forests, seas and lakes, air and mountains, caves and crevices. Stories are passed on, embellished and exaggerated, little things are magnified, and Hollywood has turned them into apparent facts.

Even real animals such as lions, eagles, bears, and wolves can migrate to the positive "light" side or, like "worms", snakes, spiders, or dragons, be turned to the "dark" side. It is therefore irrelevant whether a creature is mythical in order to classify it as good or evil.

Is a mythical beast therefore an animal, such as a fox, lion, or raven, that appears in a fable? No, in this context, mythical animals are not real animals, but rather ones that have arisen from our imagination. They are composed of various parts including human limbs or heads, such as mermaids, the Minotaur, or the Sphinx. Mythical animals appear in stories, fairy tales, legends, and fantasy novels. They have power over fire and water and are good or evil towards people. Mythical animals are often guardians of treasures or borders. On doorsteps, at crossroads, or at the gates to the underworld, they are protective symbols that are still used today as advertising motifs.

What about monsters? The Latin word "monstrum" means landmark and the word "monster" in use today is derived from it. In medicine, the term "monstra" was used for people and animals with congenital malformations. Unnatural anomalies aroused fear and terror in people. A deformed three-headed creature does not inspire familiarity; it arouses disgust and is associated with negative characteristics. These creatures appear evil and ferocious, possibly feeding on human children and spreading harm wherever they appear. Particularly in the Mannerist style, between the Renaissance and the Baroque, decor and ornamentation were replete with monsters with overly long necks, double heads or human and plant hybrids.

This short paper takes a closer look at the ornaments on objects from the Schell Collection. The viewer often needs to look very closely to see a griffin, a chimera, a grotesque, or another mythical creature. In addition to discovering these fabulous animals, it was important for the author to research their background and to consider why an artist chose a particular animal as an ornament in his work.

Grotesques

Grotesques are a combination of hideous masks and faces paired with human torsos and animal and plant elements. They could also be called stylized people.[1] They are usually very ugly figures, sometimes squatting and often winged or armless. They can be human torsos with arms and legs transforming into foliage and long and often extremely twisted necks (Fig. 1).

Grotesque art was used to decorate ceilings and walls, such as in the Vatican loggias, painted by Raphael around 1518. It creates a kind of "weightless world" of suspended gravity where beings live together with craters, garlands, plants, and tendrils. Grotesques date from the ancient grotesque paintings that can be seen in Pompeii, which the Romans used as decoration and were later revived during the Renaissance (Fig. 2).

1 Meyer, Franz Sales. Handbuch der Ornamentik. Seite 108.

Figure 4
Wooden box, 15th century.
Schell Collection. Inv. no. 3541.

The difference between grotesques and half figures, which are similarly often used as filling ornaments, are the realistically depicted arms (there are exceptions where the arms end in wings) of the latter. The lower extremities of half figures also end in intertwined tendrils. Basically, half figures are prettier than grotesques that often only exist in the form of a face (without a body). Half figures ending in foliage can be derived from the Tree of Life motif. Grotesques whose legs form into fish tails are called mermaids. So-called tail grotesques appeared around 1580–1600 with tendrils and hanging motifs.

Chimeras

Chimeras are dangerous fire-breathing monsters. They consist of body parts of eagles, lions, goats, and snakes and are usually portrayed as hissing with evil. Chimera was the child of the mythical monster Echidna and the giant Typhon. Both the parents and their children were terrifying. Besides the Chimera, their other children were Cerberus, the hound of Hades, the Hydra, the many-headed water snake-like monster, the sphinx and Nemean Lion, which Hercules slayed and skinned as one of his twelve labors.

The Chimera lived in Lycia (modern-day Anatolia) and ravaged the land with her fiery breath. She was slain by the hero Bellerophon, aided by the winged horse Pegasus, who attacked Chimera from the water. Its lead spearhead melted in the fiery maw of the monster, suffocating it. Homer told of this story and the burning oil fields in Azerbaijan still show the natural phenomenon that inspired the imagination of poets. The combination of different animals is particularly common in ornamentation and is represented on objects in many variants (Fig. 3).

The exact distinction or division between griffin and chimera is not always clear. To distinguish one from the other, it is necessary to look at the abdomen, legs and face (human or animal) and whether the torso is drawn in. Does the animal have wings or a tail? Especially in applied art, the mixing of these two mythical creatures is commonplace.

Griffins

This is a hybrid of a lion, a bird of prey and sometimes a reptile, which is shown as male or female. It probably comes from the Near East. The iconographic motif of the griffin originated in Egypt and Elam (modern-day Iran) and spread around the Mediterranean Sea from 3,000 BC. The Romans called it "*gryps*".[2]

Griffins are mostly shown in their function as guards. Deities, such as Apollo, chose griffins as working animals. A griffin is a "sunlike symbolic animal, a guardian of fire and water."[3] Its penetrating gaze represents strength and vigilance. It is both divine and human in nature–the eagle is linked to the sky, the lion to the earth. It can cross the border between heaven and earth and guard the tree of life (Fig. 4). As a mythical creature in ancient oriental cultures, the griffin appears both as a guardian of the throne and the tomb. When griffins fight each other, it is called "grypomachy".

Although the "eagle griffin" and "lion griffin" are the most common representations, it can also be shown as a female with teats. The lion griffin comes from Persian culture and reached the Romans via Greece. Sometimes, the lion's head also has curved horns. In early depictions, the eagle griffin can be seen with an open beak and upright, pointed ears; later depictions show it with a cockscomb that can reach down to the neck. If the griffin has a snake tail, the demonic is added.

In the Middle Ages, the griffin was an indomitable guardian figure, with many Gothic cathedrals having griffins as gargoyles to ward off evil. Their guardian role also extended to hidden treasure, some of which they were said to dig up themselves. They mostly reappeared in pairs in late 18th- and early 19th-century art in different shapes and materials, giving classicism a highly welcome ornament that was also immortalized in cast iron (Fig. 5). Today, explorers and zoologists deny the existence of griffins and they have returned to being mythical creatures in fairy tales, fantasy novels, and

2 Simon, Mythos und Mischwesen, Seite 17.

3 Roßmanith, Ein Blick in das Verborgene, Seite 24.

Figure 5
Bowl, cast iron, 19th century.
Schell Collection. Inv. no. 2557.

Figure 6
Window latch, 19th century.
Schell Collection. Inv. no. 3456.

children's stories. They are now less scary and more often droll, clumsy, and friendly.

As sentinels, griffins ward off evil. Since they combine the characteristics of the lion, the king of the animal world, and the eagle, the king of the air, they were considered regal and, therefore, predestined for heraldry. There is hardly a coat of arms that is not adorned with a griffin, an eagle, or a lion. Marco Polo reported seeing griffins. Another adventurer and traveler, Jean de Mandeville, mentioned that the ribs and feathers of griffins can be used to make particularly solid bows and arrows.[4]

Griffins should not be mistaken for winged lions or dragons. A griffin can be recognized by its head, curved beak, and wings of a bird of prey. The body is mostly that of a lion.

Parts of griffins, such as eggs or claws, were soon sought-after collector's items for inclusion in cabinets of curiosities. The griffin claw in St. Cuthbert's shrine in Durham is actually the horn of an ibex, while the griffin egg in the same collection is really an ostrich egg.[5]

From the Christian Middle Ages, griffins were known primarily as guardians of graves, sarcophagi, and the remains of bones in churches. The well-known "giant gates" in Gothic cathedrals are so called because, among other things, from them were hung the large bones of supposed "giants". In fact, these bones were actually from mammoths discovered during excavations (see St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna), dinosaurs from the Gobi Desert, whales, or elephants. The bones were attached to the gate of the church as a form of protection. The mammoth bones at St. Stephen's Cathedral, which were called "the shins of a giant," were probably found during the excavation work for the north tower in 1443. Today they are in the collection of the Institute for Paleontology at the University of Vienna.

In fact, these bones are the descendants of the griffins that protected treasure, in this case a church. They were proof of the existence of griffins and giants. A fully plastic griffin can still be seen on the giant gate in Vienna. Grabs at the entrances to sacred buildings also protected the threshold. The huge bones on the wall at Kraków's Wawel Cathedral have been identified as a rhinoceros skull, mammoth bone, and whale rib.[6] These relics of incredible animals can be found at churches at the threshold between the entrance and the portal– the boundary between the sacred and the profane, outside and inside. Negative forces were warded off at this point, preserving the church's sanctity.

It is interesting in this context that behind the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, on which Martin Luther nailed his theses, there once hung two whale ribs on iron chains. An elephant's tusk, regarded as a griffin's claw, is also said to have hung next to it.

Beast-shaped ornaments on buildings and doors

Ornaments in the shape of beasts, monsters, and demons carved in stone are mostly found on church buildings. They populate the fringe areas of architecture, where outside and inside meet, such as on wall corners, column capitals and bases, window reveals, and roof spouts. These "twilight places"[7] were appropriate for in-between beings, which were afforded a wide space, especially from the Romanesque period onwards, as symbols of evil. Gargoyles spit out water, which corresponds to the defensive rite of spitting out, which was used in the Middle Ages against the devil. Mascarons, envious

4 Leclercq-Marx, Hellsichtig und löwenstark. Der Greif in Antike und Mittelalter, Seite 179.

5 Armour, Fabeltiere – von Drachen, Einhörner und andere mythischen Wesen, Seite 134.

6 Laube, Von der Reliquie zum Ding, Seite 91, Anmerkung 306.

7 Dinzelbacher, Monster und Dämonen am Kirchenbau, Seite 106.

heads, and Medusa heads–most with gaping mouths, lolling tongues, and evil eyes–were also used to ward off evil (Fig. 6).

As the home is a place of refuge from the weather and outside attack, doors, windows, and eaves were fitted with obstacles against demons and evil forces (Fig. 7).

The threshold as an emotional, symbolic place that separates private from public is broken down into its purely functional components, such as the door leaf, door lock, buckle, and knocker. For many centuries, these parts were not given any special attention by art history, even though the protective symbols on them are very common, especially the bearded faces, mascarons, and dragons.

Figure 7
Key plate, wrought iron, Germany, 17th century. Schell Collection. Inv. no. 6154.

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Bio

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She is now retired and acts as a court-certified expert on locks, keys, boxes, and cast iron items for private collectors, traders, and auction houses.

Gothic Ornament and its Contribution to a new Historicist Style in Georgian England

Daniela Roberts

Abstract

When Gothic Revival emerged as a new style in England around 1720, it consisted mainly of a repertoire of elements or ornaments (such as roundels, quatrefoils, and mouchettes) associated with medieval architecture. First adapted for garden buildings, these ornaments, which also included crenellations, buttresses, and pinnacles, were soon recontextualized to enrich the façades of classical Palladian houses, such as Clearwell House or Esher Place, and to signal Gothicness and antiquity. Gothic ornaments particularly featured in interior decoration from the 1750s, often blended into the sinuous shapes of Rococo and neoclassical wall decoration and furniture patterns.

Notably, in early Gothic Revival, plasterwork ornaments were a crucial means of shaping the character of the often "shoebox-sized" rooms of contemporary interiors. In his treatise *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841), A. W. N. Pugin reflected on the 18th -century approach to ornamentation, pointing to its use in non-construction contexts as well as its monotonous repetitions, flatness, and false magnificence. In this paper, the role of ornaments in Georgian Gothic Revival will be discussed alongside their shifting significance as the defining feature of the style. Taking Pugin's assessment into account, the aim is to study the various ways in which ornamentation was applied in interior design, providing examples of various prominent Gothic Revival houses (Strawberry Hill, Arbury Hall, Pomfret Castle, Alnwick Castle, Eaton Hall, etc.). The changing meanings and functions of ornaments will therefore be considered, particularly their use as a vehicle to ennoble the Gothic style and as a reverential evocation of the past in terms of a political statement and the reinforcement of power.

Figure 1

John Carter, *View of the Great Parlour at Strawberry Hill*, watercolor, ca. 1790, Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Georgian architecture and interior design have often been disregarded as short-lived fashions particularly criticized for their arbitrary and superficial use of ornaments. The rejection of Gothic as an approved taste throughout the early and mid-eighteenth century was based on its unfavorable contrast with classical architecture, especially in terms of form, ornamentation, and mathematical and proportional relationship.[1] In his essay *The Gothic Revival* from 1928, Kenneth Clark used the term "Rococo Gothic" to dismiss Georgian-era Gothic architecture as a "purely decorative style–something self-conscious, a little far-fetched, and not too serious".[2]

The aim of this paper is to reconsider these evaluations and provide a more in-depth look at the Georgian architectural practice of Gothic Revival and its specific use of ornaments. To do this, it is necessary to examine its beginnings in England between the 1720s and 1730s, when amateur and professional architects designed the first garden buildings and domestic architecture in this new style. The specific interest in the medieval past and its architecture–which emerged much earlier in England than on the continent–was partly fueled by the political situation, specifically the recurring Jacobite uprisings against mandatory Protestant royal succession at the beginning of the 18th century. Another strong factor appears to have been the English inclination towards the architectural continuation of the Gothic style during the 17th century, as evidenced in College Gothic and ecclesiastical architecture, despite the early introduction of Palladian architecture in Britain.[3] With regard to the first garden buildings, such as Shotover Temple (1716–1717) and Roger Morris's Gothic Tower in Whitton Park (1734), which were liberated from their medieval architectural context, Gothic became a repertoire of formal elements–tracery, pinnacles, pointed arches–which could be endlessly recontextualized.[4] Seemingly "superficial" and often labeled as follies, these buildings, particularly in their ornamentation, strongly evoked the past, harking back to the origins of Gothic freedom and the constitutional liberties promoted by the Whig party or the Tories' conservative glorification of medieval rulers.[5]

The first pioneering examples of domestic Gothic Revival architecture were conceived by classically trained architects, at a time when Palladian classicism was paramount.[6] William Kent had a habit of stretching a Gothic "costume" of ogee windows, crenellations, labels, and pointed-arch windows over basic classical architectural structures.[7] His consistent and selective use of a few distinctive forms, clearly recognizable as Gothic, detached from their architectural context and recombined with accepted architectural forms paved the way for the use of the Gothic as an alternative modern style.[8]

1 "[…] the modern *Gothick* has been invented as an improvement upon this, but has, in reality, deviated from its character; it is light, fantastical, and covered with a variety of ornaments […]. In the antient architecture, no ornament was admitted but what had its origin in something necessary or useful, and contributed to the beauty of the whole. In the *Gothick* the ornaments are fanciful, and have no respect to the parts or whole of the building: in the antient all was proportioned […]." Isaac Ware, *A Complete Body of Architecture*, (London: 1756), 20; Christy Anderson, "Masculine and Unaffected: Inigo Jones and the Classical Ideal", *Art Journal* 56 (1997): 48–54.

2 Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste,* (London: J. Murray, 1974), 50.

3 Howard Colvin, "Gothic Survival and Gothic Revival", in *Essays in English Architectural History*, ed. Howard Colvin (London: Yale University Press, 1999), 217–244.

4 Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival*, (London: Phaidon, 1999), 52; Peter N. Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic. Medievalist Architecture, Furniture and Interiors, 1730–1840*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 12.

5 Brooks, *The Gothic Revival*, 52–56.

6 See: Terence Davis, *The Gothick Taste*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974); Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 31–35.

7 Peter N. Lindfield, "Serious Gothic and 'doing the Ancient Buildings': Batty Langley's 'Ancient Architecture' and 'Principal Geometric Elevations'," *Architectural History* 57 (2014): 149–150; Brooks, *The Gothic Revival*, 70.

8 Marion Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik. Ein Phänomen des englischen 'Gothic Revival' im 18. Jahrhundert*, (Hildesheim: Olms, 2004), 34.

Unlike Kent, Batty Langley attempted to base the blending of these two opposing architectural styles on a rational, regulated concept.[9] In *Ancient Architecture* (1741–1742), he tried to reconcile Gothic and classical architecture by identifying the Gothic as an order based on ancient proportion, thereby legitimizing its rules.[10] In doing so, he not only promoted the Gothic style as a set of selectable and replaceable motifs dissociated from medieval architecture, but he also extended the repertoire of Gothic ornamentation and simultaneously created greater appreciation of it. Even though his work was often criticized, this new pastiche of medieval architecture harmonized with classical order inspired amateurs and architects alike.[11] Langley's concept allowed a more liberal interpretation of ornamentation, with the repetition of forms to create decorative patterns or the combining of Gothic and floral Rococo ornaments.[12]

Similar to the treatment of the façades, an additive approach was adapted for the interior design, in which individual ornaments and motifs defined the space. Friezes of arches (Fig. 1), often applied as decorative moldings on exterior walls of Gothic Revival buildings,[13] were among the earliest features used for cornices to set the tone. These Gothic-arch cornices could vary from flat arcades to more plastically shaped Gothic brackets and from pendant arcades to series of interlacing pointed or trefoil arches.[14] The cornice focused attention on the sharp border between wall and ceiling in a contemporary space, rather than on the vaults of a medieval one.

Sometimes seen as an "ornament" in itself,[15] the chimneypiece became the main decorative feature of newly designed or refurbished Gothic interiors. Here, but also in other innovative design principles, Strawberry Hill House and the Gothic Revival pioneer Horace Walpole set new standards. While most of the designs at Strawberry Hill are known to have been guided by antiquarian intentions and remodeled after famous medieval architecture, early designs by Richard Bentley, particularly chimneypieces, are composed of a reconfigured Gothic vocabulary, including ogee arches, quatrefoils, buttresses, and cusping.[16] These designs, which show an overriding interest in ornamentation and decorative forms, are Gothic due to the selection of distinct motifs rather than their overall medieval appearance.[17]

9 Lindfield, "Serious Gothic", 150.

10 Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, 14–17.

11 McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival*, 8–9.

12 Batty and Thomas Langley, *Ancient Architecture, Restored and Improved by a Great Variety of Grand and Usefull Designs, Entirely new, in the Gothick Mode, for the Ornamenting of Buildings and Gardens [...]*, (London, 1742), plate XXXVI.

13 For example at Esher Place (Surrey, ca. 1733); Hampton House (Buckinghamshire, ca. 1738); The Gothic Temple at Painshill (Surrey, ca. 1745); Hagley Castle (Hagley Hall, Worcestershire, 1748); the towers at Strawberry Hill (1748–1782); the entrance façade at Lacock Abbey (ca. 1755).

14 Examples can be found in the Hunters Gallery at Raby Castle (ca. 1745); the Blue Drawing Room at St. Michael's Mount (1740–1750); the Oratory and Great Parlour at Strawberry Hill (1750s); the Great Hall at Lacock Abbey (ca. 1755); the Octagon Room at Tower Edge Hill (1760s).

15 John Talbot wrote to the amateur architect Sanderson Miller concerning the redesign of the Great Hall at Lacock Abbey in 1753: "The Chimney being converted into an Ornament, will have a Pretty Effect [...]," quoted in Will Hawkes, *The Architectural Work of Sanderson Miller at Lacock Abbey 1753–1757*, (Great Britain: Quail Press, 2014), 10.

16 The 18th-century altarpiece at the Parish Church of St Mary in Warwick, attributed to Timothy Lightoler, has a very similar design. Since the altarpiece seems to have been finished later than the chimney in Strawberry Hill (Figure 1) its stylistic dependence from Bentley's design is more likely than the other way around. See Doreen Joan Mills, "The Beauchamp Chapel, A Sermon in Stone," master's dissertation, University of Winchester, 2012.

17 See Lindfield, "Serious Gothic", 152.

Figure 2
Thomas F. Pritchard, plaster decoration in the entrance hall, Croft Castle, ca. 1765.

In the second phase of Strawberry Hill's reconstruction,[18] marked by the intention to replicate specific pieces of medieval architecture, the Gallery was furnished with a complete fan vault, modelled after a side aisle in the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey. Despite the pendants, the fan vault with its flat conoids presents more of a planar ceiling decoration, revealing that the interest in the vault's adaptation was not to create a medieval space but to benefit from the rich ornamentation of its reticulated tracery, ennobled by its royal inspiration and laden with evocative references to glorious medieval history. The choice of material—papier mâché instead of stone—underlines the non-constructive, primarily ornamental approach, which A.W.N. Pugin would later reject as an architectural impropriety.[19] "All plaster, cast-iron, and composition ornaments, painted like stone or oak, are mere impositions," said Pugin, who dismissed "plaster imitations of elaborate tracery" as deceptive modern artifices, which "mimic churches in disgusting profusion."[20] The translation of medieval fan vaults into a purely ornamental ceiling plane, more suitable for modern domestic spaces, was undertaken in a number of country houses of the period, such as Alscot Park (Drawing Room, ca. 1765)[21] and the Gothic Library at Stowe House by John Soane (1805–1807).

Instead of extensive ceiling decoration, a characteristic of early Georgian designs appears to be the abstract use of individual ornaments, singled out from rich fan vault tracery and developed into new configurations. In Donnington Grove, the home of Walpole's friend and amateur designer, the ceilings of several rooms are decorated with a "circular tracery motif, including lancets and quatrefoils around the lamp pendant."[22] Without a circular border, the motif becomes more dynamic, transformed from Gothic geometric moldings into vibrant curled leaves[23] extending into the flat plane of the ceiling.

A similar decorative approach was demonstrated at Croft Castle (1765) (Fig.2), where the architect Thomas F. Pritchard fused Kentian Gothic with energetic scrollwork, creating exuberant Rococo plasterwork. Flame-shaped tracery radiates around a swirl of leaves in the hall, while in the salon vegetal Rococo ornaments formed into Gothic motifs constitute the central part of the delicate ceiling decoration. In all these examples, it becomes apparent that the conscious extraction of Gothic ornamentation from its architectural context facilitates its revitalization and combination with ornamentation of different styles. A significant evolution of Gothic design through the inclusion of Rococo scrollwork can be observed in the decorative designs used by John Phillips and George Shakespear for the hall of Alscot Park around 1763 (Fig. 3).[24] The chimney overmantel is composed of closely intertwined motifs, featuring a Gothic arch structure with clustered columns, from which spring thick C-scrolls enriched with Gothic pendants (but derived from the lambrequin motif) and an ogee arch.[25] A festoon inside the structure complements the sweeping feature, in the style of Rococo boiserie. In the same room, a highly

18 Michael Snodin, "'Going to Strawberry Hill'", in *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, ed. Michael Snodin, exh. cat., Yale Center for British Art and Victoria & Albert Museum, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 43–45.

19 Pugin was referring to Strawberry Hill when he criticized modern Gothic furnishing for being modeled on sacral architecture and, in particular, on tomb canopies. He also explains what he means by propriety in regard to decoration: "What I mean by propriety is this, that the external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of, and in accordance with the purpose for which it is destined." See Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *The true Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, (London: J. Weale, 1841), 41, 42.

20 Pugin, *The true Principles*, 45.

21 Mark Girouard, "Alscot Park, Warwickshire-III. The Home of Mr. J. W. Alston-Roberts-West," *Country Life* 29, 22 May 1958, 1184–1187.

22 Christopher Hussey, "Donnington Grove, Berkshire," *Country Life*, 18 and 25 September, and 2 October 1958, 588–591, 654–657, 714–717.

23 Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik*, 114f.

24 Girouard, *Alscot Park*, 1067.

25 Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik*, 106.

Figure 3

John Philips and George Shakespear, hall at Alscot Park, ca. 1763.

flamboyant gallery of blind ogee-headed lancets rivals the elaborate overmantel. Also in the fashion of contemporary Rococo boiserie,[26] this particular design, loosely related to cabinetmakers' pattern books,[27] features a Gothic arch structure with clustered columns, from which spring thick C-scrolls enriched with Gothic pendants and an ogee arch. The cornice combines both styles: a Gothic arcade and underneath a garland of flowers. The scheme extends to the plaster ceiling with a circular Gothic fan in the center and strings of quatrefoils along the border, both opened up and rejuvenated by strands of flowers.

Blind lancets and Gothic niches became predominant features of wall structures and decoration in the mid-18th century. At Croft Castle Hall (Fig.2), the lancets appear in the form of windows, with very lively crockets in accordance

26 Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik*, 105. The arcade of ogee-headed lancets reflects the exterior design of Alscot Park, which is defined by series of ogee-arched windows and blind lancets.

27 See Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director* (London 1754), plates LXXI and LXXX.

Figure 4
Plasterwork in the hall at Tissington Hall, 1757.

Figure 5
Octagonal Drawing Room, Stout Hill, 1760s.

with the fashion for Rococo ornamentation on the ceiling boss, notably s-crolls. The decorative structure of niches and lancets was favored for entrance halls and great halls in Gothic country houses.[28]

Sequences of ogee arches in the form of an arcade were often used for libraries as the main interior design motif, unifying the decorative appearance of the space.[29] Strawberry Hill became the prototype for this layout. In some libraries, the Gothic arch was only used to mark the shape of the bookcases, with the surface allowing space for ornamental embellishments in different styles. At Malmesbury House (ca. 1750) and Corsham Court (designed by Henry Keene, 1759), the ogee arch leads to sinuous Rococo flower arrangements.[30] In the library at Sherborne Castle, the space between the ogee arches is filled with classical roundels accommodating busts bordered by a Gothic arcaded cornice and a Jacobean-style plaster ceiling.[31]

When updating historical decoration schemes, sequences of individual ornaments such as ogee arches or quatrefoils were considered suitable for filling gaps between different ornamental zones from different ages and in different styles. These isolated ornaments appeared to be compatible with other types of decoration while simultaneously serving as evocative signifiers of the country house's venerable past. Following this concept, the entrance hall of Tissington Hall (Fig. 4) was restored in the 18th century with decorative additions in the newly fashionable Gothic Revival style.[32] Above the Jacobean wooden paneling of intersecting arches, divided by pilasters, there are plaster ogee arches which appear to spring, like the fresh new shoots of a tree, from their wooden base. At Audley End House, large quatrefoils were chosen to fill the upper part of the salon's walls to mediate between the Jacobean-style plaster ceiling and the principal neoclassical decoration.[33] A reticulation of quatrefoils as a backdrop for blazons had already been used decades earlier by John Ivory Talbot for Lacock Abbey (1755–1756) to modernize the medieval hall of the former nunnery while preserving the dignity and original features of the room. Talbot had asked Sanderson Miller to provide a design for the ceiling that was "not too much Ornamented," considering the other decorative elements of the room, such as the niches and the chimneypiece.[34] The repetitive motif of quatrefoils combined with coats of arms provided a simple but evocative decorative element to the space, which was consciously designed using a narrow range of ornaments out of respect for decorum and the building's origins.

Because of its symmetrical layout, the quatrefoil seems to be by far the most flexibly used ornament in Georgian Gothic decorative schemes, forming vertical and horizontal friezes and covering wide planar areas. The use of ogee arch sequences, however, was mostly guided by the arcade scheme employed on medieval choir screens and tomb canopies. The vertical array of superimposed arches further demonstrates the uninhibited use of Gothic

28 See the entrance hall at Donnington Grove (ca. 1765) and Ashridge Park (1813); John Carr (?), "Elevation for Gothic Hall (the low hall) at Raby Castle," ca. 1768, not numbered, single sheet, Raby Castle archive. Partly published in Alistair Rowan, "Gothick Restoration at Raby Castle", *Architectural History* 15 (1972): Fig. 17 a, b.

29 See Arbury Hall, whose library was built around the same time as the one at Strawberry Hill in ca. 1755. The hall at Welbeck Abbey was later used as a library (ca. 1750).

30 Brooks, *The Gothic Revival*, 78; Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik*, 119f, 240f; Frederick J. Ladd, *Architects at Corsham Court. A study in Revival Style Architecture and Landscaping, 1749–1849*, (London: Moonraker Press, 1978), 51, Fig. 44

31 Michael Hill, *West Dorset Country Houses*, (Reading: Spire Books, 2014), 264.

32 Gervase Jackson-Stops, "Tissington Hall, Derbyshire -I", *Country Life*, 15 July 1976, 158–161.

33 The Saloon (Great Hall?) with its original 17th century design was altered in 1785 by John Griffin. See: John Dewi Williams, *Audley End: The Restoration of 1762–1797*, (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1966), 35f.

34 William Hawkes, "Sanderson Miller at Lacock Abbey", *National Trust Historic Houses Annual* (2015), 36.

Figure 6

Luke Lightfoot, ceiling and window shutters in the Gothic Room, Claydon Hall, ca. 1760.

motifs by Georgian designers, who adapted them to modern decorative needs. In the octagonal drawing room at Stout Hill (ca. 1760)[35] (Fig. 5), the walls are structured by small and wide rectangular panels with ogee arched heads flanked by classical pilasters filled with three vertically stacked arches. Various other Gothic ornaments are arranged to fit into the classical architectural structure. A similar approach is seen in the Gothic Room at Claydon House (Fig. 6), designed by Luke Lightfoot (ca. 1760s). For the window shutters, he composed panels with three vertically arranged ogee arch-heads, which can be compared with Thomas Johnson's design of a chimneypiece in his *One Hundred and Fifty New Designs* (1761).[36] The arch structure is dominated by vegetal elements similar to the pattern of little Gothic temples on the ceiling dome, alternated with knotted trees.[37] Simultaneously, classical elements are interwoven into the Gothic-Rococo decoration–the ceiling presents a classical layout of three domes and a panel structure with decorative moldings, while the skirting is decorated with rosettes and geometric elements.

However, the Gothic Room at Claydon House is not only Gothic in style. Its Gothic ornaments are overtly intertwined with its famously innovative Chinese designs. The mantelpiece decoration in the North Hall displays, without doubt, the most confident mastery of Gothic, Rococo, and Chinese taste in a single unified design. Classical pilasters rest on a Chinese landscape while supporting a Gothic arch composed entirely of Rococo C- and S- scrolls framed by rich festoons and interspersed with exotic birds and two Chinese temples.

In fact, the extracted Gothic motifs[38] with their sinuous curves and unrestrained vividness were perfectly compatible with the naturalistic Rococo and Chinese styles. By blending Rococo, Chinese, and Gothic, a new style known as English Rococo was developed, which became the trademark of the furniture maker Thomas Chippendale.[39] His sophisticated and imaginative designs are best illustrated by one of his pier glasses, characterized by its irregularity, variety, and vividness. Upon closer examination, Plate CXLVII[40] (Fig. 7) reveals an exotic pavilion with a Chinese figure atop a Baroque balustrade, composed of Gothic colonettes with leaf capitals and C-scrolls imitating the concave roof of a Chinese kiosk.

Gothic has an even longer relationship with classicism, despite their distinct differences. One of the most striking examples of this liaison are Robert Adam's designs for Alnwick Castle (1769–1782), the ancestral seat of the Duke of Northumberland. Adam recreated and recast medieval Gothic in a "decidedly fashionable 'Adamesque' mode."[41] In his hybrid decorative schemes, he used alternating Gothic and neoclassical forms and motifs as a general structural framework and as ornaments. Thereby, he reinterpreted Gothic architectural vocabulary as surface patterns, transforming distinctive medieval forms into ornaments with a classical appearance. Blind tracery or trefoil paneling often became narrow, elongated, and shallow fluting or classical fans, rose windows were converted to roundels

35 James Lee-Milne, "Stouts Hill, Uley and Hardwicke Court Gloucestershire", *Country Life,* July 5, 1973, 17.

36 Lindfield, *The Georgian Gothic*, 121.

37 Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik*, 218–219.

38 Horace Walpole pointed out the qualities of Decorated Gothic (1290–ca. 1350) as being the great richness of forms and motifs, in particular the multiplicity, delicacy, and intricacy of the ornamentation. See Marion Harney, *Place-making for the imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 100.

39 Tüting, *Rokoko-Gotik*, 131f.

40 Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director,* plate CXLVII.

41 Peter N. Lindfield, "A 'Classical Goth': Robert Adam's Engagement with Medieval Architecture", in *Robert Adam and his Brothers: New Light on Britain's Leading Architectural Family*, ed. Colin Thom, (Swindon: Historic England, 2019), 163.

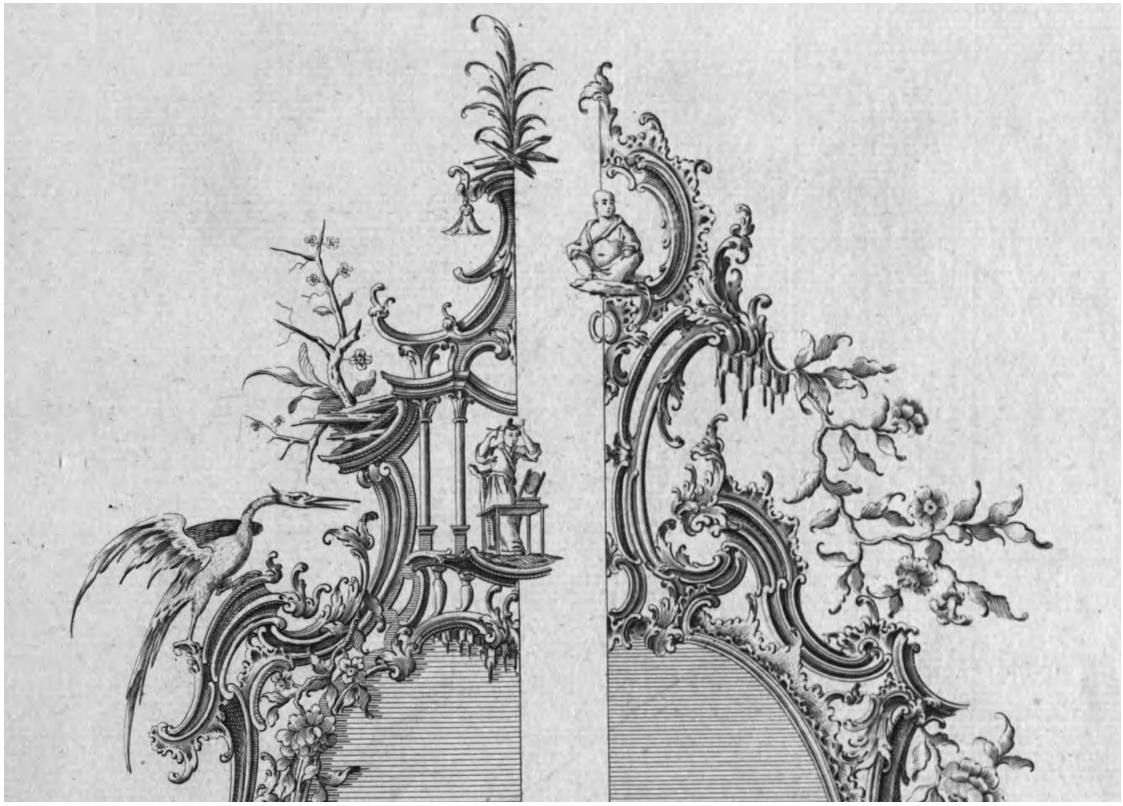

Figure 7

Thomas Chippendale, pier glass frame (detail), from *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director: being a large collection of the most elegant and useful designs of household furniture in the Gothic, Chinese and modern taste*, 1754, Plate CXLVII.

with rosettes, and clustered columns became fluted pilasters.[42]

In summary, these examples of the selective use of Gothic ornaments demonstrate that Georgian design can be described as a stylistic crossover. Gothic ornaments were employed to enhance and discipline the Rococo style while simultaneously extending the classical vocabulary of forms. The introduction of Gothic Revival facilitated the development of a characteristic national design vocabulary, where individual ornaments acted as agents for the Gothic style with all their evocative references to the medieval past and aesthetic. The detachment of Gothic ornaments from their original context and their free availability enabled the creation of highly individual multi-sensory and polysemic designs, which linked the traditional values of the past with the demands of the modern age and international taste.

42 Designs: "Recorded elevation of the West side of the library at Alnwick Castle" and "Recorded elevation of one of the ends of the Library at Alnwick Castle," 19th century, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 187/A/12/ff. 28, 30–1; "Ceiling of the Circular room at Alnwick", 1770, Robert Adam's Office, Sir Soane's Museum, London, SM Adam Volume 11/30; "Ceiling of Alnwick Castle for the Duke of Northumberland", 1770, Robert Adam's Office, Sir Soane's Museum, London, SM Adam Volume 39/13.

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Bio

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She has been a senior lecturer at the Institute of Art History in Würzburg Since April 2015. For her postdoctoral research, she is studying collection and display strategies in domestic Gothic Revival interiors in England from 1750 to 1860.

Managing Visual Material Culture in the English Lake District:

The Evolution of Décor at Brantwood

Sarah J. Scarlet-Farr

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Abstract

Brantwood House (Brantwood) was the final home of the Victorian polymath John Ruskin (1819-1900). It is located on the shores of Coniston Water in the English Lake District. Ruskin was a well-known critic of art and society and was very much the influencer of his day, specifically with regard to the arts and crafts movement. Fast forward over a century and Ruskin and his former home still attract attention. But in what ways has this changed?

Brantwood currently welcomes visitors to an accredited museum and grounds, and extends its hospitality offer to overnight stays within the house. The visual presentation, and aesthetic, of the house falls into the tradition of Robert Venturi's view of "more is more, less is a bore". Ruskin's former home is an attack on the human senses that may be re-interpreted to embody the postmodern rejection of modern design's strict functionalism.

This paper defines how the visual cultural narrative at Brantwood has been created and its evolution managed from past to present. The original conference paper was illustrated with both historical and modern images of Brantwood's interior décor. This paper presents observations about Brantwood's internal design scheme, highlighting the ornamental functions of colour, shape and texture in connecting with today's communities.

Figure 1

The Brantwood Estate.
Photograph Courtesy of J. Lewis.

Figure 2

Ruskin in his Turret (W. G. Collingwood, Brantwood). Purchased with support from the Arts Council England and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.
Image courtesy of Brantwood.

Brantwood House or "Brantwood" ("Brant" means steep mountain in Old Norse) was the final home of the polymath John Ruskin (1819–1900). It is located in the heart of the Lake District in England, an area of outstanding beauty designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Brantwood is isolated, located several miles from the nearest town, and nestled between a fell (the local name for a mountain) and the eastern shores of Coniston Water (the "Lake"). It can be reached either via a single-track country lane (on foot or by private car – there is no public transport) or by boat from the village.

Heritage properties in this area can become captive to their environment. The environmental features of the locale effect how the historic collections can be managed. The area around Brantwood is hilly, lush, green and generally cool. Moisture drains downward from the fell and is retained by its buildings and vegetation. As a consequence, the whole site can become very damp. Brantwood's jetty often disappears underwater after heavy rain, and boats cannot dock – cutting off the house. The access road can become flooded, due to rising water levels, or becoming blocked by fallen trees or snow/ice. Yet, being trapped here is rarely a hardship.

The wider locale is a multi-valley landscape characterised by an interesting mix of fells, woodlands, waters/lakes and rivers. It offers a biodiversity of wildlife and habitats, including traditional breeds of animals, such as Herdwick sheep and Fell ponies, and regional architecture (Lakeland cottages) constructed from locally available materials (stone and slate). Brantwood began life itself as one of these simple buildings during the late 1790s. The estate is now comprised of five separate buildings within grounds of 250 acres (Fig. 1). John Ruskin purchased Brantwood in the early 1870s, describing it as being "old, damp, decayed, smokey-chimneyed and rat-riddled".[1] However, he regarded it as having the finest view in the county, if not one of the three finest views in Europe. When Ruskin bought it, he addressed its poor condition by undertaking a programme of repair and restoration work (which continues today, visible from the scaffolding enveloping the house to support the fragile stonework and/or timber). Whilst Brantwood has been extended and developed by its various owners, architecturally it remains much as it was over a hundred years ago (Fig. 2).

Conserving an important estate such as Brantwood is sometimes frustrated by periodic losses of power and/or services due to the weather, combined with the aged local infrastructure. This often disrupts those activities necessary to maintain the building at a consistent temperature or humidity. The building is also listed, meaning certain parts or features of it cannot simply be changed or upgraded to more energy efficient versions (beyond its sympathetic stabilisation). Use of more modern general building materials (designed to keep water out) have contributed to its struggle to breathe and expel the moisture absorbed from the environment.

These circumstances have a lasting consequence and affect the storage and display environment of the collection. This, in some cases, influences the movement and placement of the collection to ensure its preservation. Structures (buildings) are not always the robust and protective shells we may wish them to be but are more akin to fragile living exoskeletons in need of continuous respect and care. The historic collections hidden safely inside are characteristic of organs functioning within a human body. At times, this creates a management conflict between the maintenance of the outer fabric and the inner contents, and the development of the audiences needed to sustain Brantwood.

Ironically, whilst increased numbers of visitors benefit Brantwood economically, they also contribute to raise the levels of humidity, pollutants, dust and pests in a building originally designed for a smaller number of guests. This emphasises the ongoing considerations of heritage managers. Brantwood needs to work hard to meet the needs and expectations of the guests it welcomes. Equally, it must ensure measures are in place to prevent the potential damage wider hospitality can cause.

Heritage management demands the use of an informed but strategic approach. In managing the

1 James S. Dearden, "Printing at Brantwood Pt 2: The Press," *The Book Collector* 28, no. 2 (1979): 531.

collection at Brantwood, there is a need to focus on working from the outside inward. This wasn't always the approach. In years past, inadequate temperature and dehumidification controls contributed to developing a poorly ventilated and highly humid environment. Chimneys were blocked off and windows permanently closed, increasing levels of moisture and internal pollution. Historic attempts at removing the excess humidity may have caused external moisture to be drawn in from the wrong direction (outside-in). At times, Brantwood seems to have struggled to integrate and harmonise with more modern approaches to conservation and technologies. The use of electric radiators and industrial dehumidifiers for environmental control are effective measures but seemingly less well tolerated by the building than opening windows to maintain ventilation in combination with the use of open fires – once stoked to keep spaces warm and dry in Ruskin's day. This emphasises that the application of modern "textbook" collection management controls must be informed. They need proper assessment (and regular monitoring) to ensure "best practice" is compatible with, but not detrimental to, the spaces they are intended to protect.

If Brantwood was a person, it would seem to be telling us that whilst it enjoys welcoming visitors, the number it has received on occasion has been too high, and it has struggled. When Brantwood is closed, the environmental conditions seem to settle down and its harmony recovers. Brantwood knows what it needs – and where and when. Hence a flexible mindset is needed to work with this building in terms of curation and collection management. The current management approach – to "retain, restore, renovate, add and remove" – is regarded as realistic and balanced.[2] It is focused on using more sympathetic techniques and conservation materials to harmonise with the fabric of the building and its environment. This includes sustainable materials and gentle maintenance interventions, e.g. the use of breathable paints on interior walls and exterior masonry.

Brantwood's remote location affords its visitors a great degree of stillness and respite from the noise and concerns of the modern world (as it did for its former owner). Time seems to stop. The prevalent acoustic is the sound of the wind and rain. There is a constantly changing atmosphere offering immersive periods of light and dark, illumination and shadow. Brantwood has a magical quality. It is as though it selects what it wants you to see on a particular day, drawing your attention to its features and treasures. It makes you look.

Brantwood has a distinct presence, with changes of mood. The atmosphere inside the main house alters according to the number of visitors, enabling it to almost reveal or hide elements of its décor and ornamentation as it chooses, and in a way that the author has not experienced elsewhere. In terms of the visual cultural narrative at Brantwood, there are several features which define it as a unique and creative space.

Managing a collection within an area subject to a diverse range of natural lighting conditions means observing how its spaces transform, hour to hour and day to day. Some areas of Brantwood are drenched in a dim gloom when the sky is overcast, and the clouds are laden with rain (making everything seem grey). At other times (when the sun shines), light is reflected back from the Lake, and the brightness illuminates different parts of the property inside and out. This showcases specific features like precious gems in full technicolour, making the décor and ornamentation really stand out.

The window glass in the house displays beauty in terms of its own natural patterns, bubbles and flaws. The observable levels of LUX and UV are unpredictable and fluctuating, and the difference in the light levels can be significant at particular times of year. This influences how the collection is managed and informs where items made of particular materials are best located, and when during the year.

As a manager of a historic collection, this has made the author appreciate the importance of getting to know and understand one's presentation space. Sometimes, experiencing a property from

2 Howard Hull, "Changing Brantwood", *Change Over Time* 6. no. 1 (2016): 66.

day to day, across different seasons, is the only way to learn what is required to best maintain and preserve it. At Brantwood, the learning opportunities are continuous in so many areas. The experience taken away is that historic buildings should be treated as living entities, which we must carefully observe to learn to respond to their needs.

The interpretive strategy at Brantwood has been to focus on presenting the rooms most commonly occupied by Ruskin himself as an expression of his life and works. This has served as the guiding approach in terms of developing the period décor and its schemes of ornament. Brantwood offers the visitor immersion in a rather eclectic lived-in home. This is removed from the labels and panels more commonly associated with other museums and galleries. The overall visual characteristic, and aesthetic, falls into the tradition of Robert Venturi's rebuke of minimalism: "more is more, less is a bore."[3]

The interior of Ruskin's former home can be regarded as an attack on the senses. Brantwood presents an eclectic embrace of layered colour and pattern both indoors and out. The resulting evolution of its décor is a kaleidoscopic collection of ornaments, artworks and objects that would have been fashionable amongst comfortable homes of its period.[4] To the modern eye, the scheme is perhaps busier than most are used to, but the décor and ornament in the house are enveloping and captivating.

Tracing the development of Brantwood's décor has necessitated careful regression of its sources of visual material culture, i.e. descriptions and images (sketches, paintings and photographs).[5] The surviving sources help to give an impression of the exterior, interior and general environment around Brantwood at particular times and up to the present day. However, it is difficult to track how the property was kept, arranged and decorated (and specifically by whom), or attribute when and how schemes of colour, shape and texture were applied and functioned at any given time without a degree of contextual assumption.

The domestic sphere was the psychological extension of all of its occupants (not just one famous occupant). The resulting décor and ornamentation may have been carefully selected, and arranged, to achieve both personal satisfaction and a degree of socially acceptable respectability befitting its former owner. Often this has been interpreted as requiring the inclusion of particular features (furnishings) within the design scheme to uphold the honour and reputation of the homeowner.

Art is and was an important debate, and Ruskin, as an art critic, was what we may now describe as an influencer of taste, inspiring creatives of every kind. He held a rather anti-industrial approach to aesthetics, advocating for more personalised handcrafted items based on nature.[6] Ruskin elevated the acceptance of shapes and patterns found within natural forms as signifiers

3 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

4 Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste: The Classic Handbook of Victorian Interior Decoration,* (New York: Dover Publications (Reprint), 1986); Grant Allen, "The Philosophy of Drawing-Rooms," *Cornhill Magazine*, 41, January–June, 1880, p. 312–26.

5 Hardwicke D. Rawnsley, *Ruskin and the English Lakes,* (Glasgow: James MacLehouse and Sons, 1901); John. H. Whitehouse, *Ruskin and Brantwood. An Account of the Exhibition Rooms,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937); James S. Dearden, *Catalogue of the Pictures by John Ruskin and Other Artists at Brantwood, Coniston*, compiled by James S. Dearden, (Ryde: The Educational Trust Ltd, 1960); James S. Dearden, *Ruskin, Bembridge and Brantwood. The Growth of the Whitehouse Collection,* (Ryburn Publishing/Keele University Press, 1994); James S. Dearden, *John Ruskin: A Life in Pictures,* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Bruce Hanson, *Brantwood: John Ruskin's Home 1872–1900,* (The Brantwood Trust, 1992); Kevin Jackson, *The Worlds of John Ruskin,* (London: Pallas Athene, 2018).

6 Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design,* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

of beauty, making art more accessible to, and inclusive of, ordinary people.

Ruskin was privileged to be able to fill his home with a diversity of interesting items given by family members, friends and/or collected on his travels. These items ranged from manuscripts, watercolours and oils to thousands of minerals, shells and antiquities, including classical pottery and coins. After Ruskin's death, much remained untouched and had to be recorded room by room when Brantwood's contents were listed for sale in 1931. The surviving sale catalogue (in Brantwood's library) matches well with the evidence from our visual sources.

Ruskin was as unique as the spaces that were decorated at Brantwood. Today's décor has been curated to combine his own family heirlooms with natural and handcrafted products. These were not the machined or mass-produced items of industrialisation but often rarities and curios, such as his flying fish and a section of a tomb of an Egyptian mummy. The placing of these reflects today's perceptions, expectations and understanding of Ruskin's personality. Our modern preoccupation with cultivating materialism contrasts with the opposition to commercialism and materialism that dominated the mid-19th Century.[7]

It is difficult to comprehend that Ruskin would have had the time to physically arrange the collection of art and objects which he had amassed, but it is believed that he took great interest in participating in this process. Brantwood currently echoes more of a gendered family space reflective of its wider range of inhabitants, indicating "complicated relationships between consumption, display and exchange".[8] The visual material at Brantwood may have been "staged" in Ruskin's later years on his behalf, perhaps by his cousin Joan Severn (who became his housekeeper and to whom he transferred ownership of Brantwood during his lifetime). Joan was the driver behind many of Brantwood's physical expansions – and she seemed to have a vision for Brantwood which involved extending the physical structure and the estate's size from 16 to 500 acres (all financed by Ruskin).

Today's consumer has become very design conscious. People now "curate" the spaces within their homes according to wealth, taste and design preferences which extend beyond functionalism. As visitors' interests in the care and interior and exterior design of their own homes and gardens has grown, they increasingly now ask more questions about Brantwood's décor.

As heritage managers, we serve to make sites accessible for public enjoyment and benefit. However, dictating what elements people should be interested in, or channelling our visitors' gaze only to our preferred items within a collection, is not always interesting to everyone. If engagement levels are measured by the conversations generated, then the wallpaper at Brantwood (Fig. 3) often attracts more curiosity than the fine "art" on the walls.

7 John Dawson, *John Ruskin in Coniston*, (Clunton: The Hawthorn Press, 1988), 4.

8 Anne Anderson, "Drawing Rooms: A Backward Glance – Fashioning an Individual Drawing Room," in *Domestic Interiors. Representing Homes from the Victorians to the Moderns*, ed. Georgina Downey (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 39. Anderson cites Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jane Hamlett, "The Dining Room Should be the Man's Paradise, as the Drawing Room is the Woman's: Gender and Middle-class Domestic Space in England 1850–1910", in *Homes and Homecomings: Gendered Histories of Domesticity and Return, Gender and History*, ed. K. H. Alder and Carrie Hamilton, (Blackwell Publishing: 2010a); Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-class Families in England 1850–1910,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010b); and Andrea K Tange, *Architectural Identities: Domesticity, Literature and the Victorian Middle Class,* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2010).

Figure 3
The wallpaper pattern at Brantwood. Photograph courtesy of S. J. Scarlet-Farr.

Visitors can relate more easily to our wallpaper than other collection items (such as our pieces of mahogany furniture, large collections of rocks and serious, heavy-going paintings) and even our extensive library of books. The wallpaper reflects a modern-day interpretation of an original design attributable to Ruskin. Sadly, none of the original survives at Brantwood.

The late Ruskin scholar Jim Dearden noted that a visitor to Brantwood in 1928 found the remaining wallpaper peeling off the walls due to damp.[9] The paper currently on display (in the Study and Drawing Room) was re-created in the late 1980s from what was known of the original. This was inspired by an embroidered floral motif that Ruskin once observed. In a letter exchanged between Ruskin and his friend William Ward,[10] Ruskin commented that he wanted a wallpaper made up for his new house based on *The Circumcision*, a painting by Marco Marziale in the National Gallery, London. Ruskin helpfully included a penned sketch of the design and pattern desired. In his April 1875 letter within "Fors Clavigera" (Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain), he notes, "I continually notice the bees at Brantwood flying rapturously up to the flowers on my wallpaper … for the flowers only conventional ones, copied from a radiant Bishop's cloak of the fifteenth century."[11] Unfortunately, we do not know who produced or printed it, or who hung the paper on the walls. We only know it was made. It can be identified in a 19th-century photograph by John McClelland featuring Joan Severn at her writing desk at Brantwood.

9 James S. Dearden, *A John Ruskin Collection* (London: Pallas Athene, 2017), 50–54; Dearden, James S., *Brantwood's Wallpaper* (St. Helens, Isle of White: Desktop Studio, 2018).

10 William C. Ward, ed., *John Ruskin's Letters to William Ward,* letter LXL (1872), (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1922), 112.

11 E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, eds., *The Library Edition of the Complete Works of John Ruskin* (London: George Allen, 1903–1912).

QVI COELVM CEPIT MEDIVM QVE LVSTRAVIT QVE ANIMO CVNCTA POETA SVO DOCTVS ADEST DANTES SVA QVEM FLORENTIA SAEPE
SENSIT CONSILIIS AC PIETATE PATREM NIL POTVIT TANTO MORS SAEVA NOCERE POETAE QVEM VIVVM VIRTVS CARMEN IMAGO FACIT

Figure 4

Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy: Between the Purgatorial Mountain and Florence (Domenico di Michelino, 1465, fresco, Florence Cathedral).

Figure 5

Terrace of Lust.
Photograph Courtesy of S. J. Scarlet-Farr.

The nature of engagement is rather in the eye of the beholder. Sometimes our outdoor collections and spaces are more inspiring to visitors than our indoor ones. The gardens at Brantwood are an expression of living and evolving art. Ruskin was motivated to experiment with the growing of plants on steep ground at Brantwood, having been inspired by his observations of mountain farming in northern Italy. He aimed to recreate Dante's purgatorial mount (Fig. 4), so that as one climbed the slope, one's soul was symbolically cleansed. This is reflected in the "Zig-Zaggy" – a garden originally installed by Ruskin soon after moving to Brantwood. However, maintenance of this garden was abandoned after his death. It became overgrown, and was only later rediscovered and restored in the 1990s. It is now one of the most visited ornamental gardens at Brantwood.

Evidence of the "Zig-Zaggy" design survives from two small sketches in letters exchanged between John Ruskin and his cousin Joan in 1873.[12] The content indicates the original shape, featuring a cross section of terraces retained by simple uncapped walls rising up the slope.[13] These were built from local stones found on the estate and formed a "zigzag" path between the terraces. The presentation of the current garden is an ongoing evolution of a conceptual "Hell" (black-coloured ash and barbed metallic thorns) through a changing scheme of planting, staged with other natural materials and sculptures, that sweeps upward to represent the seven deadly sins: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust (Fig. 5).

Brantwood represents a remote refuge from public and city life. In terms of décor, it reflects the ideals, tastes and preferences of its former owner and inhabitants, as well as a succession of curators and heritage managers, and the challenges involved in managing it.

12 Rachel Dickinson, *John Ruskin's Correspondence with Joan Severn: Sense and Nonsense Letters* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association/Manley Publishing, 2008).

13 David S. Ingram, *The Gardens at Brantwood. Evolution of John Ruskin's Lakeland Paradise* (London: Pallas Athene, 2014), 60–61.

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Bio

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Une querelle des ornemens?

The Private Library of the Electress Palatine Elisabeth Auguste at Mannheim Palace

Uta Coburger

Abstract

This paper focuses on one of the few remaining original rooms at Mannheim Palace and its ornamental decoration: The private library of the Electress Elisabeth Auguste. The room was designed in the 1750s by the leading court artists Pigage, Albucci, Brinckmann, van den Branden, and Egell, who also designed the gorgeous court library at Mannheim Palace.

The delicate room is inspired by the famous oval salon at the Hôtel des Soubise in Paris and was part of an intimate garden apartment created for the Electress. The process of the library's creation involved a "battle" of artistic ornamental styles and fashions between the French architect Pigage and the Italian stuccoist Albucci. Pigage, younger than Albucci, was educated at the Académie Royale and preferred a classical style, while Albucci insisted on Rocaille. The resulting room is an interesting combination: perfectly designed in the Rocaille style – but with very few Rocaille ornaments! Due to two restorations, the boiserie today no longer has its original colour. This paper, therefore, provides a brief insight into the work undertaken on the digital reconstruction of the original colour system and the lost furniture of the Electress's library.

Figure 1
Mannheim Palace, private library of Electress Elisabeth Auguste.
© Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg.
Photo: Marco Vedana (2021).

In October 1743, Elisabeth Auguste (1721–1794), Electress Palatine, wrote the following to Duke Clemens Franz de Paula, a Bavarian prince: "*je suis logée a present comme une Princesse, il me paroit etre en paradis. j'aÿ 2 cabinets, qui font les declices de ma vie*."[1] The duke was not only her brother-in-law; he was at that time her secret lover and remained a close confidant throughout his life. Elisabeth Auguste always mentioned in her letters the few changes made during her reign with pride, but unfortunately no letters from the time when her private library was created (1755–1757) have survived. Compared to the aforementioned cabinets, the private library is a far more extraordinary and delicate room, which therefore begs the question: What would Elisabeth Auguste have written about her private library? That it made her feel like a queen?

Mannheim Palace is considered the second largest Baroque palace after Versailles. According to legend, it is said to have one more window, which, of course, is nothing but a myth. The Palace was almost completely destroyed during World War II. Only the outer shell was faithfully reconstructed, with the interior rooms, occupied by state authorities and the University of Mannheim, being modern. Mannheim Palace could, therefore, be described as an example of Baroque illusionism: elaborate on the outside but built of reinforced concrete on the inside. Of the historic interior, only one room is reasonably original: the private library of Elisabeth Auguste. Thanks to the "plug-in" system of the boiserie (wood paneling), the library could be disassembled and relocated in 1944 and reinstalled in the 1950s.[2] Parts of the ceiling and the parquet flooring were lost, but the rest was lovingly reinstalled, making it a modern-day treasure.

The Rococo design of Mannheim Palace: Stylish?

Charles Theodore (1724–1799) and his wife, Elisabeth Auguste, became Elector Palatine and Electress in 1743, and resided in the unfashionable Mannheim Palace, whose construction had begun in 1720 under Elisabeth Augustes's grandfather, Elector Charles Philip (1661–1742). It was designed with Régence stucco work and *boiserie à la capucine*, bare oak wood featuring with neither paint nor gilding.[3] The style of the interior and the structure of the apartments were more reminscent of Imperial Vienna than France. This is also evidenced by the wall decoration: heavy tapestries, dark green and crimson velvets, and damasks from Genoa.[4] Four inventories and a transportation list from the 18th century provide a valuable insight into the lost furnishings.[5] By 1743, this interior was totally *démodé,* but there were no funds for extensive remodeling because of "*notre economie derangée*" as the young Electress wrote in March 1743.[6]

A new spirit blew into the Palace from 1749 with the hiring of the young architect Nicolas Pigage (1723–1796). Pigage was born in Lunéville in Lorraine and in 1744 he began his training at the

1 Susan Richter, *Amo te solo. Briefe der Kurfürstin Elisabeth Augusta an Clemens Franz, Herzog in Bayern 1743–1770.* Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar (Heidelberg: heiBOOKS Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, 2021), 158.

2 Ferdinand Werner, *Die kurfürstliche Residenz zu Mannheim* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006), 226–236. Werner's publication is the most comprehensive account of the architectural history of Mannheim Palace.

3 Johann Friedrich Uffenbach, "Reise durch die Pfalz 1731," in *Mannheimer Geschichtsblätter* 29 (1929), 124–164. Uffenbach was the first to describe the interior of Mannheim Palace.

4 Charles Philip inherited a mountain of debt from his brother when he came to the throne. As a result, he initially used the furnishings from his brother's Düsseldorf residence, which were brought to Mannheim by ship across the Rhine. See "Residenzschloss Mannheim. Von der Grundsteiglegung zur virtuellen Rekonstruktion," paper presented at Conference Mannheim 2021 (due for publication in 2025).

5 *Inventarium von Schloss Mannheim*, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Pfalz Generalia, Inv. No. 77/3904 (1728), 77/3895 (1731), 77/2765 (1746), 77/2769 (1758), 77/2764 (1775).

6 Richter, *Amo te solo*, 76.

Académie Royale d'Architecture in Paris.[7] During his time at the Academy, some of his designs were awarded prizes. It is unclear who recommended him to Charles Theodore, but in February 1749 the 26-year-old Pigage was appointed director of gardens and water arts at the Palatinate Court. But what were Pigage's influences? To put it simply, the Lorraine-inspired Rococo interior design of Germain Boffrand (1667–1754) and the Parisian Neoclassicism of Ange-Jacques Gabriel (1698–1782) that superseded it. What awaited the young architect at Mannheim was a palace style that the French court architect Robert de Cotte (1656–1735) is said to have shaken his head at, as the famous Balthasar Neumann (1687–1753) reported smugly.[8] Alastair Laing stated that "the detailing of the exteriors–despite the almost exclusive presence of French people in Mannheim–[…] is more thanks to Italy than France."[9] Laing also referred to the unbroken influence of Italian architects in southern Germany at that time.[10] We will see that this also included the ornamental decoration at Mannheim Palace.

Pigage's appointment was in any case a deliberate wish on the part of the Elector for a new style despite the limited resources. Furthermore, the timing was ideal, as the leading court architects Alessandro Galli da Bibiena (1686–1748) and Guillaume d'Hauberat (1680–1749) had just died. Shortly after his employment, Charles Theodore entrusted Pigage with the completion of Mannheim Palace, the east wing, as well as some remodeling of the interiors. Pigage soon earned an unchallenged position at the Palatinate Court. In 1752, he was appointed *Premier Architecte des*

Figure 2
Mannheim Palace, court library.
© Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg.
Photo: Hubert Lill (1897).

Son Altesse Serenissimus Palatin; in 1756, he was appointed *Wirklicher Rat* (councilor); in 1763, he became a corresponding member of the *Académie Royale d'Architecture* in Paris; and, five years later, he became a member of the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome. He was finally ennobled by the Elector in in 1768 as Nicolas de Pigage.[11]

Pigage's employment coincided with a general period of upheaval in interior decoration, spanning Rococo, Neoclassicism, and Goût grec. Criticism of French Neoclassical ornamentation was strongly directed at the way ornament was used. It was supposed to be classical, natural and–above all–subordinate to the architecture. These demands were soon also adopted by German architectural theorists. Rococo ornament, and especially Rocaille, was reviled in a way that amuses art historians today. Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein described it

7 Wiltrud Heber, *Die Arbeiten des Nicolas de Pigage in den ehemals kurpfälzischen Residenzen Mannheim und Schwetzingen*, Vol 1 (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1986), 1–6.

8 Karl Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe Baltasar Neumanns von seiner Pariser Studienreise 1723* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1911), 16.

9 Alastair Laing, "Palace architecture in the Empire", in *Baroque and Rococo. Architecture and Decoration*, ed. Anthony Blunt (London: Elek, 1976), 277.

10 Laing, "Palace architecture", 272.

11 Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 5–20.

Figure 3
Mannheim Palace, gallery wing, stucco detail by Giuseppe Antonio Albuccio.
© Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg.
Photo: Hubert Lill (1897).

as "*Barbarey*" (barbarism) in 1746,[12] while Friedrich August Krubsacius called it "*Hirngespinste*" (pipe dreams) in 1759.[13] This does not change the fact that an unbroken passion for extravagant decoration with "rampant Rocaille ornaments" prevailed, especially in southern Germany, until the 1770s.

The new court library: A team effort?

A project close to Charles Theodore's heart was the great court library, which Pigage designed in June to July 1755.[14] Pigage had to work together with the other court artists and problems soon arose with the Italian stuccoist Giovanni Antonio Albuccio (1720–1776). Both presented their own plans for the design to the Elector in July 1755. Albuccio's included Rococo ornamentation,

12 Ulrich Schütte, *Ordnung und Verzierung. Untersuchungen zur deutschsprachigen Architekturtheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts,* PhD dissertation, Heidelberg University (1979), 82.

13 Frank-Lothar Kroll, "Zur Problematik des Ornaments |im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Ornament und Geschichte. Studien zum Strukturwandel des Ornaments in der Moderne*, ed. Ursula Franke and Heinz Paetzold, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996), 70.

14 Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 117–149. From 1763, the Elector opened the library to the public, allowing the collections to be accessed at fixed times.

with Rocaille details, flower tendrils, and frolicking putti, that extended from the wall far into the ceiling and did not feature frescoes.[15] However, the design chosen for the library assigns the ornament to the cove (*voute*), while the ceiling fresco not only fills the entire ceiling but also extends into the cove and covers the ornamentation. Pigage would have preferred to work with the young Augustin Egell (1731–1786), but the Elector's decree stipulated that only court artists should work on the prestigious project, hence Albuccio's role.

This first collaboration exemplifies a common conflict between architect and ornamental artist concerning the role of ornament. From the architect's point of view, and dating back to Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), ornament was not an art genre of its own; it was an appendage to architecture but subordinate to it. It was therefore not only "pipe dreams" of Rococo decoration that gave rise to criticism but also ornamentation that was too dominant. In the end, Albuccio had to adapt his designs to the wishes of the Elector and Pigage for less ornamentation. At the same time, in 1756, the same artists decorated the adjacent sequence of rooms in the gallery wing, which housed the Medal Cabinet, Picture Gallery, and Collection of Classical Antiquities. Albuccio's ornamentation in the gallery wing shows Italian influences with predominantly vegetal and figurative motifs. Rocaille is used sparingly and the ornamentation is predominantly symmetrical. Putti with attributes, laurel garlands, and heraldic motifs, such as the Palatinate lion, characterize the wealth of forms used.

Pigage and Albuccio's collaboration was therefore probably more of a marriage of convenience than an ideal team effort. We know from Pigage's later works that he appreciated reduced, more classical ornamental forms in accordance with the Parisian taste of the time, which since the 1750s had demanded a *simplicité noble* and helped the Goût grec to become fashionable. The conflict with Albuccio and the changes in the designs may therefore have been "*une petit querelle des ornements*" (a tongue-in-cheek reference to the "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes"). However, Pigage had to come to terms with Albuccio, who was still in favor at court, since his imaginative and high-quality designs also conformed to the taste of the Electors at that time.

The Electress's library: A private hideaway

When the Elector sent a letter to the Court Chamber on August 15, 1755, instructing Pigage to redesign the "vaulted room" (*Gewölbzimmer*) as a private library for his wife,[16] the response today is to smile. No sooner had the Elector commissioned the court library than Elisabeth Auguste, who is said to have had a very dominant character, wanted a private library of her own. The library was to be part of an *Appartement de Commodité* included on the ground floor in Pigage's 1750/51 plans ("*petit appartement pour Leur Altesse Electorale*").[17] Of this projected apartment, only the library was completed. Pigage directed the interior decoration and used the same artists as for the court library.[18] All invoices were published by Wiltrud Heber, but the poor relationship between Pigage and Albuccio persisted, as the former reduced the agreed sum and the latter only received the full amount after complaining to the Court Chamber.[19] He also remarked that he had run the room "on Pigage's orders."[20]

15 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstbibliothek, Inv. No. Hdz 445.

16 Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 175.

17 Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim, Mannheimer Altertumsverein, A 170, 1.

18 Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 175–184.

19 Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 175–184. Albuccio's stucco work was the first to be completed, in January 1756. The woodcarving in the boiserie was by Johann Matthäus van den Branden (1716–1788) and the aforementioned Augustin Egell. The paintings were by Philipp Hieronymus Brinckmann (1709–1760).

20 Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 177: "*auf befehl des Herrn Hof Cammerrathen und Oberbau Director Pigage*."

Figure 4
Mannheim Palace, private library, Watteau scenes on the boiserie.
© Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg.
Photo: Uta Coburger (2024).

The private library is a cheerful and intimate space away from the state apartments.[21] In the original rectangular room, Pigage planned a decorative system that avoided corners and blurred the boundaries between wall and ceiling. Access was only from so-called wallpaper doors within the boiserie so that, when these were shut, the room appeared to be closed off except for the three French windows on the garden side, providing a perfect retreat for the Electress. The program of contents includes themes and motifs relating to science, faith, nature, and antiquity– entirely appropriate for a princely cabinet library of the time. Due to the interweaving of wall, cove (*voute*), and ceiling, it is unclear at first glance where Albuccio's stucco decoration ends and van der Branden and Egell's boiserie begins. Since Albuccio's designs are missing, it is impossible to state at this point what his original intention was. However, we may have found some clues, as we will see later.

If we look at the ornamental motifs, one thing is striking. Presumably to correspond to the character of a garden apartment, the stucco consists primarily of vegetal ornaments and motifs such as vines, rods, flower garlands, and some Rocaille. In addition to the plant ornaments, the original color scheme with its various shades of green emphasizes the garden motif. With the exception of the Watteau scenes, the current color scheme dates from the 1950s. A restoration examination of the library in 2018 revealed the colors of the original version and that a brownish version had also been applied in 1879.[22] The current color version is therefore the third layer.

The restoration campaign revealed even more fascinating details. The original 18th-century layer of the boiserie showed a shimmering bright sheen.

21 A small connecting staircase leads up to the Electress's state apartment on the first floor. The remains of this staircase still exist.

22 The study was carried out in cooperation with the Technical University of Munich and was the subject of a master's thesis (unpublished) by conservator Quentin Saltzmann, MA..

Figure 5
Hôtel de Soubise,
Salon ovale de la Princesse,
Paris.

This corresponds to a note in the 1804 inventory describing the room as being "Chinese in style."[23] As there are no chinoiserie or oriental motifs to be found in the room, this historical description could indicate that the room's appearance was once akin to a lacquer cabinet, as had already been suspected. The findings of the restoration campaign support this suspicion. The campaign also uncovered a piece of evidence that could point to more lavish ornamentation by Albuccio: plaster carvings in the cove for planned but never executed Rocaille and tendrils. This could be the reason for Albuccio's disgruntlement with the work carried out "on Pigage's orders."[24] As with the court library, the stuccoist had planned more lavish ornamental decorations than were ultimately executed, again as a result of the requirement for less ornamentation.

Influences: From Paris to Mannheim

The decorative system used for the private library has been associated with that of the oval rooms at the Hôtel de Soubise in Paris, especially Germain Boffrand's Salon ovale de la princesse.[25] Created in 1735–37, they are "perhaps the most ravishing rooms surviving from the period."[26] A comparison of the oval salon depicted in Boffrand's *Livre d'Architecture* in 1745 with Elisabeth Auguste's library show a very similar spatial treatment consisting of arcades, niches, polygonal picture fields, and a swinging cornice. In particular, the unusually designed cove of polygonal fields has the decisive internal function of interlacing wall and ceiling in both rooms.

The ceilings, on the other hand, are designed differently. That of the salon is decorated with golden ornamentation, whereas Pigage chose a ceiling painting with undesigned fields facing the cove. Whereas in the Hôtel de Soubise, the ornamentation forms the ceiling, in the Mannheim library it only functions as a framing element. Ornament is subordinate to the architecture and the frescoes, just as the art theory of the time demanded. With closed doors in both rooms, a closed boiserie system is obtained. Visible openings are only formed by the French windows. However, the Mannheim Library is far more intimate, although this may be function-related, as it was a room in a private apartment, while the official cabinets were furnished in more representative mode, according to the decorum. It was an intimate cabinet, a "cocoon," rather than a representative hall.

This is also reflected in the color scheme for both rooms. The oval salon, as part of the representative apartment, is accordingly sumptuously decorated with prolific gilding. The color system is also very clear: all ornaments are gilded, the boiserie has a white background, the ceiling is azure, and only the picture panels in the cove are polychrome. Thanks to the restoration campaign, the original color system of Elisabeth's Auguste's library can also be imagined. The dominant color was pistachio green, as can still be seen in the background of the absorbent Watteau scenes. This is complemented in the Boiserie by crimson, blue, and light orange. Neither gold nor silver can be seen, and the color scheme, together with the vegetable motif, creates a garden-like space.

At first glance, the Hôtel de Soubise's cabinet des livres could be seen as another overlooked role model, as it was supposedly created in 1737/38.[27]

23 "No 5 Comgagnie Zimmer, ganz ausboisirt, und vom bildhauern reich geschnitten, und auf Chinesische Art gemahlt – vom Plafond bis auf den Fuß boden," *Inventarium von Schloss Mannheim 1804*, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Inv. No. 56/4154, 18. The interpretation of this passage as an indication of a lacquer cabinet was first provided by Heber, *Die Arbeiten*, 183.

24 See note 20.

25 Philippe Béchu and Christian Taillard, *Les hôtels de Soubise et de Rohan-Strasbourg: Marchés de construction et de décor* (Paris: Centre historique des Archives nationals/Somogy éditions d'art, 2005).

26 Christopher Tadgell, "The decline of Louis XIV, the Regency and Louis XV," in *Baroque and Rococo. Architecture and Decoration*, ed. Anthony Blunt (London: Elek, 1976), 137.

27 Béchu/Taillard, *Les hôtels de Soubise,* 346.

Francois Boucher's blue camaïeu paintings in particular appear to have been an inspiration for the crimson camaïeu paintings in the Electress's library. However, in the inventory of 1749, the room is described as "*garderobbe où couche les valets de chambre*" and only the following inventory of 1787 clearly proves that it was a library and princely cabinet.[28] It is unclear when the room was redesigned as a library.

The Electress's cabinet library occupies an exceptional place within Mannheim Palace. It is not only one of the last relics of the once-magnificent interior decoration but also a highlight of the Rocaille style, albeit with few Rocaille ornaments. No other room in the palace so consistently negates traditional structural elements, the pictorial interweaving of wall and ceiling, and the close linking of picture and ornament. For Pigage, the period in which it was created was also a turning point. At Benrath Palace, commissioned by and certainly designed in close consultation with Charles Theodore, he developed the architecture and interior from 1755, but the Rocaille was largely absent–replaced here by the classicist Goût grec style.

Since the room is not open to visitors for conservation reasons, a special project was undertaken to reconstruct the library virtually based on the historical inventories and descriptions as well as the restoration research on the original color scheme.[29] Using virtual reality headsets, visitors are able to experience the room as it was. It begins with the visitor standing in the room as it is today and then travelling back in time to the 18th century and the library that Elisabeth Auguste would have known. A porcelain solitaire and letters can be seen on her writing desk, some of which can be listened to on audio file: "*je tremble pour la semaine prochaine, l'El[ecteur] de maÿence viendra, et cela me gene, il faudra paroitre, et moi je n'aime que la solitude*."[30]

Figure 6
Virtual reconstruction of the library at the time of Elisabeth Auguste.
© Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg.
Produced using Pixelcloud, Ludwigsburg (2024).

28 I would especially like to thank Sabine Meuleau from the Musée des Archives nationales Paris, who provided me with transcriptions of the two inventories and was extremely helpful. Archives nationales, MC/ET/XCIX/501 (10/02/1749); Archives nationales, MC/ET/XCII/880 (10/07/1787).

29 This was part of the flagship project "Kulturliegenschaften 4.0" of the Ministry of Finance, State of Baden-Württemberg. Its intention is to enable barrier-free viewing via virtual reconstructions and special applications.

30 Richter: *Amo*, 340/342. Elisabeth was considered to be exceptionally fun-loving, in contrast to the introverted Charles Theodore. However, after the death of the hereditary prince in 1761, which was her only documented pregnancy, she wrote increasingly of gloom and health problems.

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Bio

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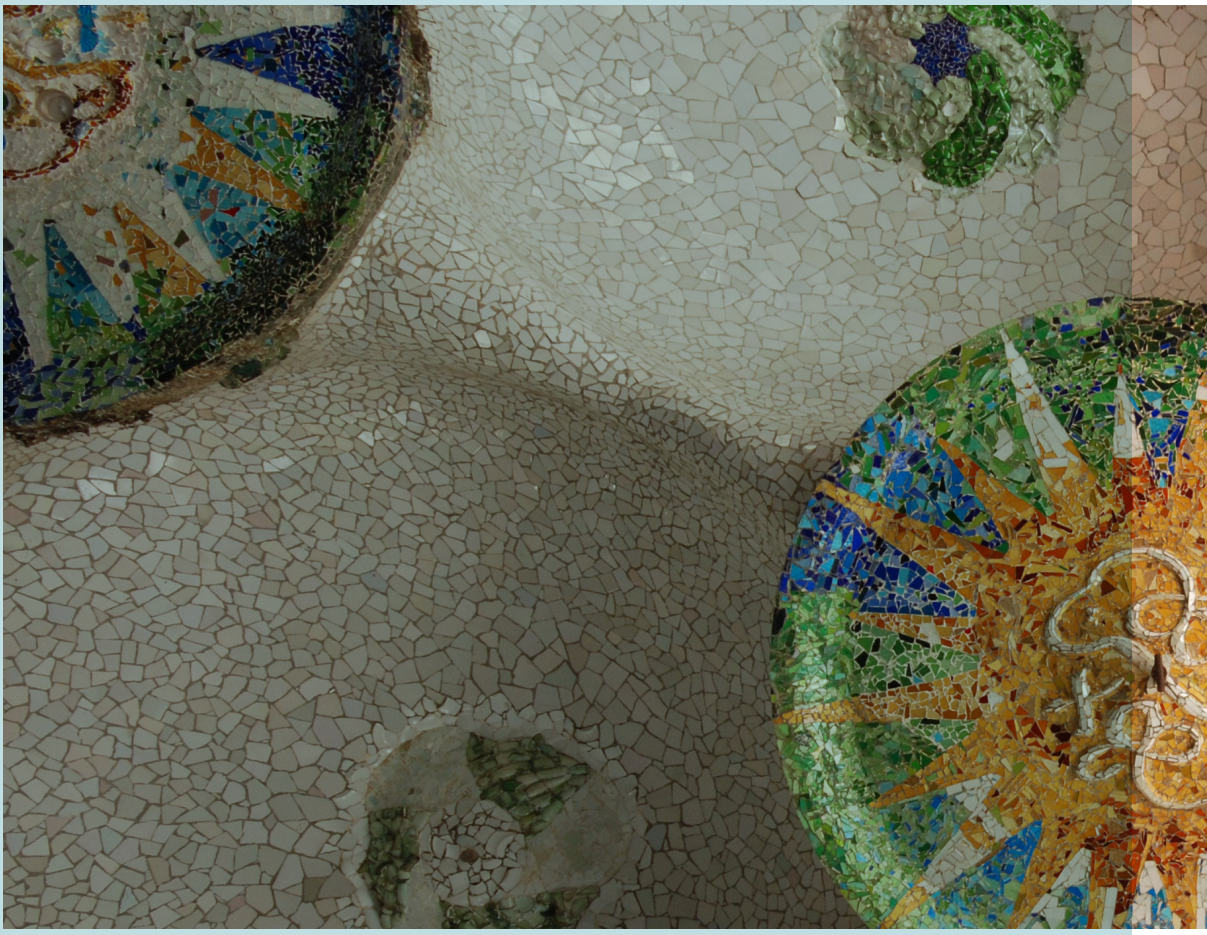
She completed her PhD on the Bavarian Baroque artist Egid Quirin Asam in 2007 and specializes in the art and cultural history of the early modern period and 18th-century decorative arts.

Josep M. Jujol and Ornamentation:

Faith, Freedom, and Recycling

Mariàngels Fondevila



Abstract

Josep M. Jujol (Tarragona, 1879–Barcelona, 1949) was one of Antoni Gaudí's favorite collaborators. He contributed to invigorate Gaudí's architecture and shared great creative syntony with him. For example, Jujol was responsible for the decoration of the Hypostyle Hall in Park Güell in Barcelona, which consists of panels incorporating broken porcelain, pieces of glass, family crockery, bottle caps, flasks, and other waste items.

He also ornamented the Park's serpentine bench, an icon of the Mediterranean city, which he covered with Marian calligrams. However, he gained very little recognition during his lifetime. It was only years after his death and in the context of postmodernity that his work became better known. A part in this process was played by The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, which organized an exhibition entitled "*Jujol, diseñador*" in 2002. This gathered together more than a hundred objects (furniture, grilles, lamps, and drawings) from around Catalonia, and especially from rural villages, and helped to change the perception of Jujol as a someone who lived purely in the shadows of the great master of modernist architecture: Gaudí. This paper analyzes Jujol's ornamental concepts within the decorative arts and design in the light of his religious ideology and, above all, how, in flashes, they foresaw contemporary art and Surrealism.

Testimonies are collected from his contemporaries, who considered his pioneering approach to recycling sacrilegious. The beauty of imperfection in his fragile and ephemeral ornamental concepts is also replete with sensuality and exuberance.

The architect Josep M. Jujol (Tarragona, 1879–Barcelona, 1949) was one of Antoni Gaudí's favorite collaborators, with whom he shared great creative syntony and a daring approach to ornamentation inspired by the past. This paper analyzes Jujol's ornamental ideational approach to the decorative arts and design in light of a religious ideology, and, above all, how it shows glimpses of contemporary art. Jujol was one of the pioneers of recycling and sustainability long before these words became fashionable and before global concern about climate change had materialized. His work, which shows the beauty of imperfection and the fragile and temporary, maintains its exuberance through its ornamental praxis, preserving the soul of things during the increasing industrialization and globalization of the first decades of the 20th century.

In 1949 and the post-war period, the echo of Jujol's death was very discreet compared to that of Gaudí. However, his work has been claimed by a new generation of postmodern architects and, above all, has been a source of inspiration for contemporary artists.

Tarragona and the Mediterranean identity

Jujol's background is key to understanding his intellectual approach to ornament. He was born in Tarragona—an ancient city in southern Europe close to Africa and one of the most important cities in Hispania during the Roman Empire—into a rural family with deep religious convictions.

He had a strong affinity for Latin culture (his floor, wall, and ceiling ornaments and all kinds of objects had Latin inscriptions) and a deep Mediterranean identity. He admired and studied the old monuments, especially the medieval cathedral of Tarragona, built over a Roman temple.

His status as a man "born in the Mediterranean" is revealed in his first important work in Tarragona in 1908: the construction of a theatre for the *Patronat Catòlic Obrer.* It represents a boat sailing at sea with hidden ornaments depicting flora, fish, and anagrams of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, all witnesses of his faith.

His artistic legacy can be found scattered across the territory of Camp de Tarragona,[1] where he worked, especially in his last years, as an architect, blacksmith, sculptor, painter, calligrapher, and designer of church furniture and rural architecture. Most of his clients were farmers, rural priests, and small religious communities or friends with moderate budgets. Most often he was commissioned to design small-scale adaptations of old buildings. He used local materials and preindustrial techniques, and it is not unusual to find a continuous bond with the past in his ornamentation. He painted his liturgical objects in the gold color of the medieval period (especially glitter or metal dust) and adopted the triptych format. He was also inspired by the Catalan Baroque and Rococo styles and their *horror vacui*: deliquescent and flaming forms decorate tabernacles, lamps, pieces of furniture, and walls of churches, while at the same time reflecting his hallmark calligraphic fury. Jujol was heir to the popular traditions and religious imagery of the Holy Week Confraternities (he even decorated sculptures of saints in the chapels), while echoes of the Islamic Mudejar Mediterranean culture also punctually appear in his decorations.

One of Jujol's most impressive contributions to his native land was the refurbishing of Casa Bofarull, an old Catalan farmhouse. Among many of his additions to the house, he decorated the roof with *trencadís* (a technique learned from Gaudí, as explained below), plates, a pitcher, and a sculpture of Archangel Gabriel denoting his great poetic sensitivity.

To conclude, Jujol's emotional ties to Tarragona are proof of his conservative attachment to the land and its traditions.

1 In villages such as Vistabella, Constanti, Els Pallaresos, Vallmoll, Montferri, el Vendrell, Roda de Barà, Creixell, and Bràfim. They are all witnesses of Jujol's surprisingly inventive architectural and artistic personality.

Jujol, Antoni Gaudí, and Barcelona

Despite this deep emotional attachment to Tarragona, to understand Jujol's art we need to mention his relationship with Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. In 1888, when Jujol was just eight years old, he and his family moved to the city. At that time, Barcelona had just recently organized the Universal Exposition and was in the middle of an important urban expansion that would eventually lead to it becoming an epicenter of Art Nouveau. Jujol studied at the Faculty of Architecture,[2] where he worked with different architects, some of whom were followers of the Arts and Crafts movement. He learned the techniques of ceramics, sgraffitos, heraldry, and liturgical ornamentation from Antoni Gallissà, but it was Antoni Gaudí in 1906, then at the peak of his fame among the bourgeoisie, who most decisively influenced the young Jujol.

Working with Gaudí was a great opportunity for Jujol, who was twenty-seven years his junior. Jujol admired the master's creative talent and many of his methods, especially the use of *trencadís* mosaic, a technique of great beauty and functional hygiene. It is well known that Gaudí (influenced by medieval and Mudéjar styles) used this ornamental technique based on irregularly shaped pieces of glass or ceramic tiles, that had been either recycled or rejected, to cover façades and chimneys. It was used for the first time on the buildings of the industrialist Eusebi Güell in Barcelona (1884–1887), on which a contemporary journalist for *La Vanguardia* commented in 1890 that Gaudí was a true artist who made beauty through garbage.[3]

Through his master's innovative techniques, Jujol learned the art of recycling. One of the most important projects he worked on with Gaudí was that of the ornamentation of Park Güell (1907–1914), decorating the medallions in the Hypostyle Room and the benches.[4] Jujol incorporated dislocations and the arbitrary use of objects arranged in the shape of a star, spiral, or sun (Fig. 1), using materials such as pieces of broken domestic porcelain, glass, mirrors, broken bottles, and even a porcelain doll's head, showing that he, the apprentice, had gone one step further than his master with his use of *trencadís*. These extraordinary creations, and Park Güell in general, are recognized historically as forerunners of the 20th-century avant-garde movement in their use of techniques such as collage and of movements such as Arte Povera and the use of the *object trouvé* by the Surrealists.[5]

Examining the famous snake-like bench in Park Güell, it can be seen that Jujol inscribed hidden signs, flowers, and a set of words as a veiled tribute to the Virgin Mary. However, they were written disjointedly, and out of order, to make them difficult to read. They were discovered by two students, Josep Garganté and Santiago Lorepena, and copied by Joan Matamala in a 1967 album, which recorded 81 different inscriptions containing the word "Maria" and 21 featuring the monogram "M" with a crown.[6] Unfortunately, the majority of these inscriptions were destroyed during repair work on Park Güell in 1994, which saw a part of the *trencadís* removed.[7] In 2002, I had the opportunity to analyze them with one of the discoverers (Josep Garganté) and Jujol's son; it was a special moment to see the inscription *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae* facing south at noon, at the time of the reciting of the Angelus (Fig 1.1).

Why are the inscriptions cryptic? It is important to keep in mind that Barcelona at this time was experiencing one of the most turbulent episodes in its history: the Setmana Tràgica

2 The faculty had a very important library providing Jujol with access, among others, to the works of Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, especially his popular *Dictionnaire rasisonné de l'architecture française du XIè au XVIe siècle (1854–1868)*, and *Glossary of Ecclessiastical Ornament and Costume* by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin.

3 "*Un verdadero artista que consigue hacer brotar la belleza de entre los mismos escombros*."

4 Mireia Freixa and Marta Saliné, *Gaudí y el trencadis modernista*, (Barcelona: Triangle Postals, 2020).

5 Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Park Güell de A. Gaudí*, (Barcelona: Ediciones La Polìgrafa, 1966).

6 Joan Matamala, *Llegendes i motius. Decoració del banc de l'esplanada del Parc Güell*, (Barcelona, 1967).

7 A fact that was denounced by the then director of the Cátedra Gaudí, Joan Bassegoda i Nonell.

Figure 1
Domes in the Hypostyle Room decorated by Jujol in Park Güell.

Figure 1.1
Inscriptions by Jujol on a bench in Park Güell.

(Tragic Week), when rioters and anarchists burned many churches and convents. As the first Christians had done, Jujol, who shared Gaudí's mystical and religious beliefs, inscribed hidden signs and phrases and his own signature in the form of a cross by adding a horizontal stroke to the letter "J".

Around the same time, it is well known that Jujol worked on Casa Milà[8] (known as La Pedrera) from 1906 to 1912.[9] Among other things, he was responsible for part of the plasterwork on the ceilings with the inscriptions alluding to Maria and popular songs. According to oral accounts, Jujol painted the interior of the dining room himself by throwing a cloth soaked in paint at the walls with a small wooden stick.

Jujol worked contrary to clichés and norms and was wildly creative, which was not the case with Gaudí's other collaborators. Notably, during Gaudí's restoration of the Cathedral of Mallorca, a jewel of Mediterranean Catalan Gothic art, his daring ornamentation of the walls of the presbytery with ceramics in the shape of palms, olive branches, and the shields of the bishops of Mallorca scandalized some members.[10] However, it was his work on the paintings in the choir that caused outrage (Fig. 2).[11] As recalled by Emili Sagristà,[12] who witnessed one of Jujol's painting sessions, "Jujol was applying paint, not with a pot but with a large decorator's brush that sometimes dripped. Jujol would ask, 'What do you think, Senõr Antoni?' 'Good, Jujol. Outstanding.'"

Apart from his work on the Cathedral of Mallorca from 1908 to 1914, Jujol showed his ability with colors when he painted the model of the Sagrada Família (exhibited at the 1910 Salon des Beaux Arts in Paris) with golds, reds, greens, and a cobalt blue alluding to the firmament on the Great Night of the Nativity. The work marveled Gaudí, as the architect Joan Bordas[13] remembers, who witnessed its completion in the workshop of the Sagrada Familia. Gaudí applauded all of Jujol's work, finding in the enthusiastic Catholic (who resembled himself) an artist who contributed to bringing his architecture even more to life.

Jujol: A personal approach

Gaudí's powerful imprint was unable to cancel out Jujol's personality. On the contrary, Jujol found himself by working in Gaudí's shadow, which allowed him to produce an indisputably personal *oeuvre*. The different works he produced for the industrial locksmith Pere Mañach (who in his youth had been the first dealer of Picasso's works in Paris in 1901) are a good example (Fig. 3). In 1911, Jujol decorated Mañach's new small shop in Barcelona, covering the entire surface of the ceiling with spots in various colors and allowing himself to be carried away by the freedom. The intensely Expressionist atmosphere he created was appreciated by Joan Miró (who lived close to the shop)[14] and Alfonso Buñuel (brother of the filmmaker Luis Buñuel), who was linked to Paris's Surrealist circles. The satirical magazine *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*[15] described him thus: "He is daring. He is a genius of ornamentation. When he works, he causes misfortunes and dirties the architecture with *sanfaina* colors (ratatouille)." J.F Ràfols even described him as a "hallucinated mystic" who worked ungoverned by reason.

8 One drawing by Jujol reminds us that Casa Milà had been completed and decorated with an image of the Virgin Mary. However, the project was never realized because the owners were afraid of the anti-clerical mood in Barcelona.

9 Jujol Jr, *Jujol & Gaudí,* (Sant Lluís: Triangle Postals, 2019).

10 Catalina Cantarellas Camps, *La renovación de la industria cerámica en Mallorca*: *La Roqueta, 1897 –1918*, (Palma: Museu de Mallorca, 1985).

11 Pere-Joan Llabrés, *Gaudí a la catedral de Mallorca*, (Sant Lluís: Triangle, 2005).

12 Emili Sagristà, *Gaudí en la Catedral de Mallorca: anécdotas y recuerdos*, (Castelló de la Plana: Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura, 1962).

13 Joan Bordas, "Al costat d'en Gaudí," *La Publicitat*, June 25, 1926, 3.

14 Josep Melià, *Joan Miró*, (Barcelona: Editorial Dopesa, 1971).

15 "I creador de linies noves," *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, no. 1728, (February 9, 1912): 99.

Figure 2
Jujol's painting above the choir stalls in Mallorca Cathedral.

Figure 3
Interior decoration of Mañach's shop by Jujol. Photograph by Arxiu Jujol.

Again, the *leitmotiv* of the ornamentation is a masked tribute to the rosary and the Virgin Mary. Mañach, with a past linked to anarchism, was then a fervent Catholic. His religious devotion can be found in two surviving heart-shaped chairs connected to the tradition of Spanish mysticism; the door handles, also preserved in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, are articulated around an arrow that crosses a heart. This is probably due to the holding of the International Eucharistic Congress devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus,[16] which took place in 1911, the year Mañach opened his shop.

Jujol also designed new industrial workshops and furniture for Mañach after his marriage.

16 Ambroise Vollard, who became a friend of Mañach's from his time in Paris when organizing the first Picasso exhibition in 1901 in his gallery, visited Mañach's workshop in 1917 and recalled in his *Souvenirs d'un marchand de tableaux* (Albin Michel, 2005) that at the entrance stood a religious sculpture that protected it from the strike that took place in Barcelona.

Noteworthy works include the bureau in which Mañach kept musical scores, now in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (Fig. 4). The bureau was designed in the form of a pendant with a piano polychromed by Jujol himself, which also disappeared during the Civil War. To create it, Jujol worked with his own hands, using rudimentary techniques and humble materials (pine wood in this case). He disguised the poverty of the materials by applying a richly colored lacquered epidermis in which red and turquoise were the predominant colors. It also had studs and used other metallic elements to create a collage. The front represents a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart with purpurin gilding and silver varnish, all of which suggest a mutated altarpiece.

Other sets of furniture (specially designed for his own house) are ornamented in a very rudimentary manner with traditional pyrography techniques. According to family testimony, Jujol imprinted his characteristic drawings directly on the furniture with a red-hot iron, which had been previously heated in his cheap, domestic kitchen. Other pieces are ornamented with Latin calligraphy, anagrams corresponding to the different members of the family, his signature with a cross, the "T" of Tarragona, clouds, birds, and other Mediterranean-inspired elements, such as agaves, and the unmistakable sea furrowed by a Latin sail. He also made a set of "Cubist" furniture for Casa Bofarull (Els Pallaresos, Tarragona) that shared similarities with the work of a group of avant-garde Czech architects, especially Josef Chochol.

However, his vocation was not so much about working with the wood but rather about transforming what already existed, such as old packaging or second-hand furniture, which he then redecorated. Jujol's son recounted that his father arrived home loaded with things he had collected along the way—cans, nails, bits of cardboard, and glass—that he would personally transform into objects with new life and purpose and a redemptive character. A good example of this is the lamp in the Church of the Sagrat Cor in Vistabella (Tarragona), made out of wooden laths, a nail, wire, and cans. The candelabra in the church are made from wooden skittles recycled from everyday children's games and condensed milk cans. Even the tabernacles (such as the one in Bonastre, Tarragona) call to mind knapsack sprayers like those used by

Figure 4
Jujol's bureau for Pedro Mañach (1922–1925).
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Figure 5
Casa Negre (Sant Joan Despí, Barcelona).

local farmers. He made some religious sculptures out of scrap iron, using newspapers and "coffee grounds" or ash to draw with.

In Sant Joan Despí (Barcelona), where Jujol worked as a municipal architect, he left an original legacy with the Torre de la Creu and the remodeling of an old farmhouse, Can Negre, in a lyrical and vibrant Rococo style (Fig. 5). Jujol recycled once again, using cardboard boxes and dolls' heads for the interior, which he bathed in an intense blue that recalls the color of popular Catalan ceramics. He even incorporated farm tools as decorative elements in one of the iron gates of the house.

Jujol's work was undertaken in a context of social and religious conflict, but it was his celebration of life and the small details that stand out above all. He made ephemeral street decorations, pennants, and garlands, decorated cake boxes, scraps of papers, and left unforeseen details in his architecture like the footprints of a cat. His work was spontaneous and poetic, naive and humorous; he enjoyed himself as he worked.

However, the high level of his craftsmanship and the precariousness of the materials he used pose challenges to the restoration and conservation of his work. This became apparent during preparation of the "*Jujol, diseñador*" [Jujol, the designer] exhibition at the National Art Museum of Catalonia (MNAC) in 2002, which brought together more than a hundred objects (furniture, grilles,

Figure 6
Actor John Malkovich standing beside an item from the exhibition *Jujol Dissenyador* at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in 2002.

lamps, drawings) from Catalonia, especially from rural contexts (Fig. 6).

Recently, the Jujol family donated a number of the architect's pieces to MNAC. These include three ornamental canvases resembling tapestries with calligraphy created for the ephemeral ceremony of the poetry competition Jocs Florals (Floral Games) in 1907. These large canvases, which originally decorated the Gothic columns of La Llotja in Barcelona, arrived at the museum in a deplorable state of conservation. Many other ephemeral ornaments by Jujol have disappeared, such as the Expressionist paintings with inscriptions on the Roman wall in Barcelona in honor of King Jaume I (a key figure in the establishment of Catalan nationality) from 1908 and the aforementioned store owned by Mañach that we only know through photographs.

Although conventional in his private life, Jujol invested his art with a free-ranging imagination that crossed boundaries and subverted norms, like the artists of the avant-garde. It should be noted, however, that he had no relationship or affinity with the artistic vanguard (Surrealism)—on the contrary—due especially to his intense and never-disguised religiosity.

Safeguarding and recycling became the central concern of his artistic practice. His works were created before there was a public understanding of climate change, but his ambition and spirit of experimentation have much to teach us as we face our environmental emergency. He is the author of a unique body of work, which is very fragile due to the poverty of the materials used and in danger of disappearing. However, it is rich and exuberant as a result of the fusion of ornament and sustainability with a message of redemption.

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Emancipating Sculpture: Female Statues in the 19th-Century American Home

Katherine Manthorne

Abstract

Ruth Hall, the lead character in Fanny Fern's (a.k.a. Sara Payson Willis) popular 1854 novel of the same name, suffers a visit from her mother-in-law, who is shocked to find a nude female statue decorating her granddaughter's nursery. Ruth Hall and her living sisterhood, this essay argues, likely had a specific message in mind when they adorned their homes with select statues of mythical women. Here we examine three paintings of domestic interiors: Lilly Martin Spencer's *Conversation Piece* (ca. 1851–52, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and two group portraits of New York families: Nicolino Calyo's *Sarah Rogers and Richard K. Haight Family* (1842–43, Museum of the City of New York) and Edward Lamson Henry's *Parlor in Brooklyn Heights: Mr. and Mrs. John Bullard* (1872, Private Collection).

Given that domestic space and its ornamentation were thought to be revealing of an individual's identity, their contents can be read autobiographically. Since statues of commanding historic women were praised by Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone as well as Fern for their ability to advance women's rights, we can read their display in domestic interiors as aesthetic expressions of female power and support for the emancipation of women.

Fanny Fern & Middle-Class Ornament

The worst domestic nightmare of many a married woman is captured near the beginning of Fanny Fern's (a.k.a. Sara Payson Willis) popular novel *Ruth Hall* (1854): a visit from her dour, nosy mother-in-law to her new home.[1] With a pitch-perfect blend of sentiment and wit, Fern describes the elder woman's tour of inspection and juxtaposes her snap judgements on what she assumes are costly expenditures versus Ruth's frugal decorative effects:

> "This is the parlor, hey?" soliloquized old Mrs. Hall, as she seated herself on the sofa. "A few dollars laid out here I guess." Not so fast, my dear madam. Examine closely. Those long, white curtains looped up so prettily from the open windows are plain, cheap muslin; but no artist could have disposed of their folds so gracefully. The chairs and sofas, also, Ruth covered with her own nimble fingers. The room has the fragrance of a green-house, to be sure; but if you examine the flowers which are scattered so profusely round, you will find that they are *wild flowers*, which Ruth, basket in hand, climbs many a stone fence every morning to gather.[2]

Determined to reveal signs of extravagance and poor housekeeping, she surveys room after room until she reaches its inner sanctum, the nursery:

The floor is strewn with play-things; thank God, there is a child in the house! There is a broken doll; a torn picture-book; a little wreath of oak leaves; a dandelion chain; some willow tassels; a few acorns; a little red shoe… [then finally] her eye falls on a crouching *Venus* in the corner. Saints and angels! Why, she has never been to the dress-makers! There's a text now! What a pity there is no appreciative audience to see the glow of indignation with which those half averted eyes regard the undraped goddess![3]

Having discovered what was probably a copy of the ancient marble statue of a female bather in Rome's Vatican Museum, she departed, satisfied. The author felt no need to explain the presence of the nude goddess in the nursery, for her readers would have understood—as advice manuals emphasized—that "the educating influence of these works of art can hardly be overestimated." Sculpture in the home not only encouraged emotional sensitivity but it also trained children "to correctness of taste and refinement of thought."[4]

The fictional Ruth Hall, along with her flesh and blood sisterhood, as I argue in this essay, likely had a more specific message in mind when they adorned their homes with select female statues. Taking Mrs. Hall's tour of Ruth's décor as our point of departure, I examine three paintings of domestic interiors: an imagined genre scene and two group portraits of New York families. Since domestic space and its ornamentation were thought to be revealing of an individual's identity, regardless of gender, we can begin to read these contents autobiographically.[5] Interpreting these interiors displaying statues of mythological women for the possible meanings they carried for the female occupants, we discover their relationship to contemporary debates over women's rights and expressions of female power.

1 My readings of the paintings and sculpture in this essay were inspired by Laura Keen Lessing, *Presiding Divinities: Ideal Sculpture in the Nineteenth-Century American Domestic Interiors*, PhD diss. (Indiana University, 2006).

2 Fanny Fern (Sara Payton Willis), *Ruth Hall* (NY: 1854), 59, quoted in Lessing, 70.

3 Fern, *Ruth Hall*, 61; quoted in Lessing, *Presiding Divinities,* 70.

4 Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home* (NY: 1869), chapter 6, quoted in Lessing, *Presiding Divinities*, p. 71.

5 Charlotte Gere, *Artistic Circles: Design and Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement* (London: V & A Publishing, 2010), 81. Gere is referencing the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century, but her observations can equally apply here.

Figure 1
Harriet Hosmer, *Beatrice Cenci,* 1857,
St. Louis Mercantile Library, marble, 24 × 64 in.

The Response of Women's Rights Leaders to Sculpture of and by Women

America's deep engagement with sculpture in the 1850s coincided with the rise of the women's movement, especially after Susan B. Anthony teamed up with Elizabeth Cady Stanton to become its leaders. With few actual portraits of nineteenth century women made for public display, activists deployed idealized statues of goddesses, allegories, and historic characters to stake their claim to the public sphere. Viewing Hiram Powers's *The Greek Slave* in 1851, Lucy Stone underwent what she termed an epiphany that opened her eyes to the subjugation of women. "There it stood in silence, with fettered hands and half-averted face–so emblematic of women. I remember hot tears came to my eyes at the thought of the millions of women who must be freed."[6] This experience catalyzed her career as an advocate of women's rights and abolition. In 1857 the New York exhibition of Harriet Hosmer's statue *Beatrice Cenci* attracted the attention of two more advocates for women's rights (Fig. 1). "I have been to see Miss Hosmer's statue of Beatrice Cenci," Fanny Fern declared in her magazine column, "and I hope all who read this will go too… I thank the gods, too, that the young sculptress had the courage to assert herself–to be what nature intended her to be–a genius–even

6 Quoted in Nicole J. Williams, "'Graphic Statues': Female Monuments, Media Publicity, and the Struggle for Suffrage," *Women's Art Journal* (2021): 31, fn. 22.

at the risk of being called unfeminine, eccentric, unwomanly."[7] Studying the same work, Anthony noted in her diary that the sculptor "has done more to ennoble and elevate woman than she could possibly have done with mere words."[8] These activists saw the potential of portrayals of women—especially those by women—to teach, inspire, and counter the prevailing attitude that they should be confined to the home. From that moment, the alliance between the political crusaders and their sisters of the chisel and brush grew stronger as they advanced their shared goal of equality. Popular works were reproduced in multiple versions, sold to middle class buyers, and displayed in their private residences. Although critic James Jackson Jarves referred to them disparagingly as "ordinary parlor statues, Eves, Greek Slaves, Judiths, and the like," they transcended the role of "mere ornament" to became contested sociopolitical symbols.[9]

Lilly Martin Spencer's Interior Spaces

About 1852 Lilly Martin Spencer created *Conversation Piece* (Fig. 2) featuring a proud father standing by his young child and wife who—like Ruth Hall—has placed the statue of a nude goddess nearby. Only a few years earlier in 1848, Spencer had moved from Ohio to New York City and began producing her domestic tableaux of women set in kitchens and ornamented bedrooms or parlors. Previously, women artists were restricted to formats deemed socially acceptable for their gender: miniature portraits painted on ivory or bouquets of flowers done in delicate watercolor. Then Spencer came along and shattered convention.

Figure 2
Lilly Martin Spencer, *Conversation Piece,* ca. 1851–52, Metropolitan Museum of Art, oil on canvas, 28 5/16 × 22 5/8 in.

Spencer's New York City debut and attention to female subjects coincided with the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York in July 1848. Born Angélique Marie Martin to politically progressive parents, she married Englishman Benjamin Rush Spencer in 1844 and gave birth to thirteen children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. Since she became their principal breadwinner while her husband managed her art career and their growing household, she clearly had little time for conventions and marches. Yet her pictures portrayed upstanding and independent-minded females that reinforced the message of the women's movement.[10]

7 Fanny Fern, "Where Have I Been, What Have I seen?" *The New York Ledger* (December 19, 1857).

8 Jennifer Leigh Moffitt, "Representation and the Modern Female Subject: The New Woman Painter in Literature," PhD diss. (Florida State University, 2014), 17.

9 James Jackson Jarves, *The Art Idea* (1869), 305, quoted in Lessing, *Presiding Divinities*, 7.

10 The most complete source is still Robin Bolton-Smith and William H. Truettner, *Lilly Martin Spencer 1822-1902: The Joys of Sentiment* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1973).

Spencer was uniquely positioned in the New York art world of that time to be able to offer a mother's perspective on domesticity. Her *Conversation Piece* skillfully depicts a family group, partly inspired by the artist's own household, in their middle-class parlor, where several of the decorative elements refer to Spencer's French heritage (she was born in England to French parents), including the wallpapered screen, Limoges compote, Carcel lamp, and Zoave doll, dressed in the national colors of red, white, and blue. These articles assure her viewers that this housewife runs a finely decorated and orderly home in which to educate their child. Like Ruth Hall's mother-in-law, however, we may wonder about the prominence of the small statue in Spencer's picture, emphasized through its place of honor on the mantle as well as its doubling in the mirror, providing simultaneous frontal and rear views of what is a partially draped female figure. It can be identified as a small-scale copy of one of the most famous marble statues of ancient Roman history: the *Callipygian Venus* (Museo Nazionale, Naples), meaning "Venus (or Aphrodite) of the beautiful buttocks."[11] Raising her peplos to uncover her hips and buttocks, she looks down and slightly back over her shoulder. The twist of her body and line of sight direct her glance toward the baby, dressed in white with blue bows on the sleeves and bonnet. Although to a modern audience blue connotes boy, in the mid-nineteenth century females were dressed in blue, the color associated with the Virgin Mary.[12] Spencer's carefully orchestrated composition carries a proto-feminist message: her young daughter's future is linked to Venus's promise of love, beauty, fertility, and prosperity.

The Haight's library with Canova's *Three Graces*

In the early 1840s, Sarah Rogers and Richard Kip Haight posed with their four young children in the library of their Gothic revival summer cottage, surrounded by some of their favorite possessions. This small watercolor and gouache on paper, although neither signed nor dated, has been attributed to Nicolino Calyo (Fig. 3). A globe and map of Asia reference Richard Haight's profession as a prosperous importer as well as the family's far-flung travels. Books, Greek vases, and Gobelin tapestries take their places alongside a copy of Antonio Canova's sculptural group of the *Three Graces* in the niche behind them. The portrait establishes a parallel between the loving bonds demonstrated by the family members for one another and those of the marble figures standing behind them.

After their marriage in 1828, the couple evolved a relationship that was unconventional for their social class, which allowed Sarah Haight opportunities to pursue her interests far beyond the domestic realm. She traveled alongside her husband on long journeys, sometimes leaving her children in the care of others so she could be on the road. She learned several languages and did translation work before she began to chronicle their travels. She was among the first American tourists to the Nile on their 1836 visit to Egypt and published accounts that earned her a reputation as an esteemed travel writer. Regarded for her brilliant intellect as much as for her beauty, she undoubtedly exerted her opinion in the choice of artworks and sculptures they brought home from their travels.

It is likely that they acquired *The Three Graces* during their extended European sojourn. Versions of Canova's work could be seen in exhibitions in various American cities throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as in private residences. His discretely clad dancing figures were especially popular, while his female nudes presented more of a display challenge, with respectability requiring that they be strategically placed away from well-trodden entrance halls and reception rooms, where they might offend an unwitting guest. In the painting, we see *The Three Graces* in the library, where visitors generally did

11 "Recent Acquisitions, A Selection, 1998-1999," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 57: 52.

12 These color associations are discussed in Jo B. Paoletti, *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

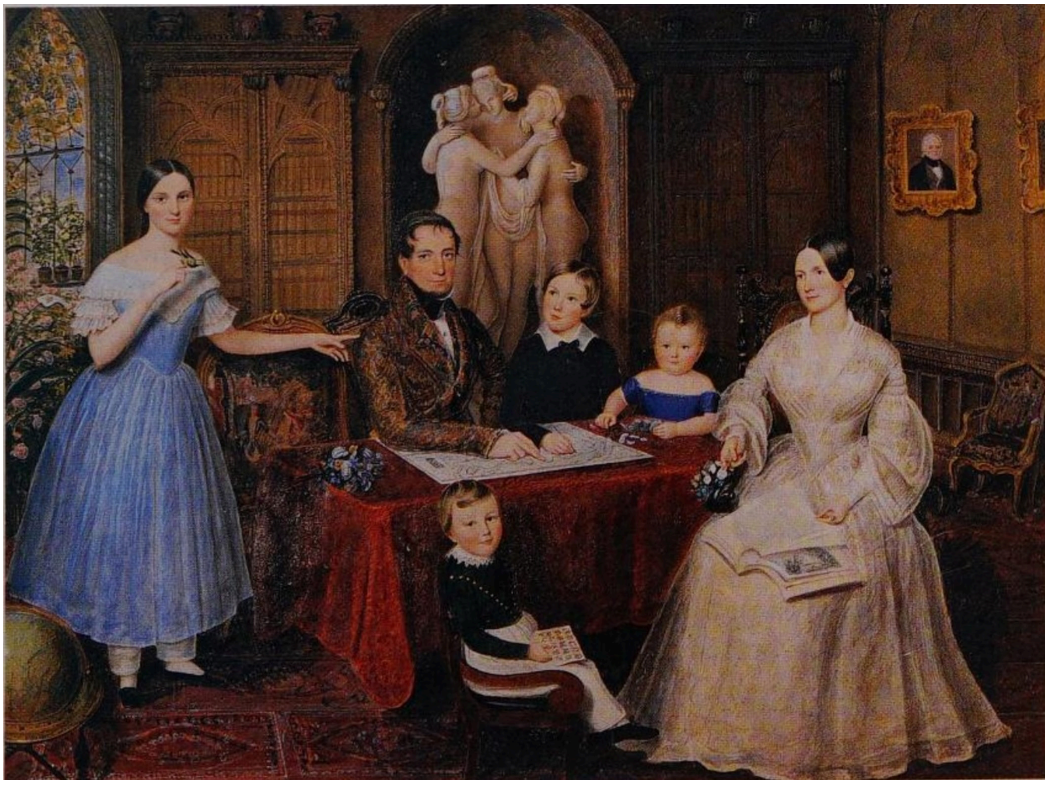

Figure 3
Nicolino Calyo, attrib., *Sarah Rogers and Richard K. Haight Family*, 1842–43, Museum of the City of New York, gouache on paper, 20 × 15 in.

Figure 4
Edward Lamson Henry, *Parlor in Brooklyn Heights: Mr. and Mrs. John Bullard*, 1872, Private Collection.

not wander. Anchored in a niche, the sculpture denies the viewer the possibility of walking around it and examining it from multiple perspectives.[13]

Wherever they were situated, neoclassical statues conveyed the sensitivity and refined taste of their owners. Given that the Haights were cultured and well-traveled, they enjoyed significant access to a wide range of sculpture for purchase. So why did they choose the *Three Graces*? Their portrait holds clues, for in it the Haights have arranged themselves with a deliberate focus on the women. Richard and his younger children are clustered around the table in the center, seated so that their bodies are not fully visible. Daughter Lydia, dressed in blue, is presented standing so that we see her in full-length to the left of her father. Also dressed in blue is her sister–baby Frances–whose arm brushes against her mother's. Sarah sits on a chair at the far right, positioned a bit beyond the table to show her in full view in her stunning white dress and the illustrated volume in her lap. The fact that she holds a book is significant, for it is an attribute usually reserved for the more educated and worldly male and not the female. It echoes the map sitting on the table in front of her husband, signaling the gender equality they enjoyed. Presiding over the group and echoing the mother and her two daughters are the *Three Graces*, considered symbols of beauty, joy, and splendor. The associations are clear. Sarah and Richard are raising their children in an environment emphasizing learning, culture, and respect for women.

Mr. and Mrs. John Bullard & Harriet Hosmer's *Medusa*

Known for his pictures of imagined historic scenes filled with eighteenth century treasures, Edward Lamson Henry undertook the double portrait of Mr. and Mrs. John Bullard in their residence in Brooklyn Heights in 1872 (Fig. 4).

Bullard, a prominent leather merchant, sits reading his newspaper–the symbol of male authority–while his wife poses with folded hands, gazing directly at him. Through the full-length windows at the rear can be seen the East River and the skyline of Manhattan, where he made his fortune. (Upon his death in 1881 John Bullard left two million dollars, the equivalent of sixty-five million dollars in 2024). Their paintings and *objets d'art* appear in a harmonious arrangement along the lateral walls, all paying homage to the good taste of their owners without being ostentatious or calling undue attention to themselves. All the objects, that is, but one: Harriet Hosmer's *Medusa* stands prominently at the rear, in the exact center of the composition, looming over John Bullard's shoulder (Fig. 5).

Hosmer was a remarkably successful expatriate American sculptor whose work was much sought after. Her tabletop depiction of *Puck*–a mischievous fairy from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*–exists in numerous versions and adorned many a parlor in the U.S. and Britain. The Bullards, however, opted not to acquire that most popular of Hosmer's works but instead her bust of *Medusa.* A figure from Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* she–upon angering Athena–was transformed into a monster with snakes in her hair and a gaze that turned those who looked upon her to stone. Hosmer depicts the earlier moment with a still beautiful face and hair writhing in transformation. What little information that has so far surfaced about the Bullards details his leather goods business and philanthropy. Brooklyn newspapers tell us that they married late, had no children, and that he "had fine musical taste."[14] One of the few mentions of his wife explains that she was selected to sit on the Art Committee of the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair, held in 1864 for the benefit of Civil War soldiers.[15] Since numerous notices of John Bullard's interests and activities never mention the visual arts, we might suppose that Mrs. Bullard was behind the artworks displayed in their home, including Hosmer's

13 An excellent overview of the Haight's Canova is provided in Lessing, *Presiding Divinities*, 23–62.

14 "Obituary," *Times Union,* Jan. 14, 1881, 4.

15 "The Great Fair. The Preparations Made for It," *Brooklyn Union,* Jan. 9, 1864, 5.

amazing depiction of the soon-to-be-transformed Medusa. Her bust presides over the Bullard's parlor, conveying the contemporary understanding of her as a beautiful monster and emblem of female power.

Much of what has been written about nineteenth century American domestic sculpture assumes a male collector and then proceeds to a male-centric interpretation. The rooms of American homes were said to function as "trophy chambers, filled with the visible symbols of [the man's] status and success in the world of business."[16] But what if we take our cues instead from Fanny Fern, who characterizes her heroine Ruth Hall as exerting control over her domestic surroundings? For research confirms the author's assumption that in the second half of the nineteenth century middle-class women took an active role in selecting art works along with other furnishings for their home. They populated their spaces with statues of historic female figures: Venus, The Three Graces, or Medusa, among others. But unlike gallery exhibitions or museums that provide written exegesis on the sculpture, display in a domestic interior was allowed to float free, opening up the possibilities for a variety of interpretations. Many still regard these overstuffed interiors as having been designed mainly for aesthetic appeal. Residents and visitors could appreciate the artworks as "mere" ornament, affirmations of the status of the man of the house. The mistress of the house and her circle of like-minded female guests, by contrast, could embrace the lessons about powerful women to be gleaned from myth and history. In the spirit of the women's movement, initiated at Seneca Falls, NY, in 1848, the domestic interiors depicted in these paintings deliberately featured statues of powerful females where they were understood to convey ideas of womanly virtue, possibility, and emancipation from oppression.

Figure 5
Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, *Medusa,* ca. 1854, Minneapolis Institute of Art, marble, 27 × 21 × 9 ½ in.

16 John Davis, "Children in the Parlor: Eastman Johnson's 'Brown Family' and the Post-Civil War Luxury Interior," *American Art* 10, no. 2 (1996): 73.

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Bio

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Dress of cotton muslin, gilded metal thread and Indian jewel beetles.
Britain, 1868-9.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
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ICOM international council of museums

ICDAD ICOM international committee for museums and collections of decorative art and design